

**TIMES
EVOKE**

AROUND THE WORLD
IN WEIGHTY WAYS...

It's that time of year, gentle reader, when so many of us take a break — hence, the cafes of Paris, the gardens of London and the cliffs of the Alps are found bursting with families and friends. Travel, interestingly, is no longer a solo, inward experience — it is now a shared voyage, parcelled out between those with whom you journey and those you share the reels with. Alongside, travel retains its original charm, helping you learn new facts about the world as well as, through your responses to it, yourself. That is why we still journey — the views make up for the queues.

Yet, travelling over our wondrous planet poses its own paradox for our wanderings are now damaging Earth itself. In 2024, the world tourism industry produced 8.8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Over 1.4 billion tourists journeyed internationally — of these, 58% used air transport to get to those cafes and cobblestoned streets. This is significant, aviation itself contributing 882 million metric tons of global CO₂ emissions. Road trips added — in 2023, global road transport, which includes many holiday-makers, emitted 8.24 billion metric tons of CO₂ — while rail emitted over 100 million metric tons. The journey isn't even the destination here — in 2024, the global hospitality industry, encompassing all, from a breezy hammock swaying on an island beach to a golf cart driving over the velvet-green lawns of an opulent hotel — produced over 1% of total global carbon emissions.

'How' lies in astonishing energy, water and waste practices. A hotel, with its elevators, restaurants and device-heavy rooms — few using their own renewable power — can emit up to 25 kg of CO₂ a day. While five-star hotels can use 1.5 million gallons of water every month, certain resorts suck up eight times more water than entire local communities. Meanwhile, in 2024 alone, global tourism contributed 28% of the total 1.05 billion tonnes of food wasted across the world, which includes households and retailers. That's every half-eaten sandwich, uneaten salad and heaving dessert bar in every hotel buffet across the planet. There is no reprieve — consider how cruise ships in the Caribbean alone produce 70,000 tons of waste annually, much of it landing in marine ecosystems, poisoning inhabitants who can't just get up and take a break.

However, there are solutions. As Times Evoke's global experts emphasise, learning about the impacts of our holidays will help us plan them far more wisely. Travel is no longer a light-hearted escape — it presents us with some of the most pressing challenges of the Anthropocene. We can still solve these, making voyages more sustainable, thoughtful and equitable. Join Times Evoke in rediscovering holidays — and travel with lighter baggage.

'Tourism was an affluent privilege — it's now becoming a working-class right'

When did travel change from being largely pilgrimages to pleasure trips?

Modern tourism has multiple origins — pilgrimage may be among the most important. But tourism as a phenomenon grew with the Industrial Revolution and the 18th century culture of romanticism. A notion spread that the landscape was changing rapidly. Cities were expanding, factories were beginning to dot the countryside. As industrialism grew, the word 'tourism' itself spread — there was a yearning to see what was authentic before it disappeared or contemplated the sublime infinity of mountains and seas.



A good definition of 'modernity' is that this is a condition where people feel things are always changing — they're in a state of constant unsettlement. Tourism becomes one way to participate in that spectacle of unsettlement. Importantly, pilgrimage itself was, or is, about a transcendence, changing oneself through travel — that remains part of modern tourism. Of course, with the Industrial Revolution, cities also grew crowded — some, especially in the 19th century, saw cholera and tuberculosis outbreaks. So, there was an emphasis on hydrotherapy, sunlight and milder temperatures that drove people to travel. Ironically, some destinations they chose were earlier considered places of disease — the Mediterranean coast, for instance, was once thought to be somewhere you could get malaria. But those landscapes were transformed into places now considered healthy, therapeutic escapes from unpleasant modern industrial life.

You've written of post-1945 tourism — what were some surprising research findings?

The most surprising was how all the forms of tourism we know today, whether it's going to the beach, visiting museums or even ecotourism,



Sasha D. Pack is Professor of History at the University of Buffalo. Speaking to Srijana Mitra Das at Times Evoke, he discusses how — and why — we travel:



FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD... 'Escapes' are a powerful feature of modern industrial life — as cities have grown crowded, polluted and demanding, people across economic classes look forward to taking a break in wholesome, calmer surroundings

have a very deep history — they all existed well before 1945. Post-WWII, tourism became organised like never before — it almost became a right rather than a privilege of the well-to-do. Affluent people always took holidays but after 1945, members of the working class also aspired to have this kind of escape from everyday life.

That was organised to a great extent by governments and intergovernmental organisations like the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. An interesting example is how, in the late 1940s, Great Britain was facing a serious currency crisis with the pound sterling rapidly devaluing. One way the government convinced other countries to hold more pound sterling in their reserves and bolster its value thus was by restricting British tourist visits. They essentially offered, 'Well, we'll permit, say, 50,000 British tourists to visit France if France agrees to hold this much of our currency in reserve'. This was the first time tourism became an object of international negotiation — after WWII, it grew far more into an element of governmental attention.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

What have been some of tourism's ecological impacts?

Like most modern economic endeavours, tourism has often cover the exploitation of labour

a major environmental impact — some studies put transportation alone as accounting for 13% of global carbon emissions. In developed economies, where more travel has occurred over the past, one-third of carbon emissions estimatedly come from transport, which includes tourism.

There are other major impacts too — hotels entail constant lighting, huge water use, deploying new linens daily, discarding half-used products, wasting food and doing things we ordinarily don't do at home. Another extremely important impact is altered land use — when you make sprawling coastal resorts or mountain hotels, you are disrupting ecosystems in ways we can't even entirely comprehend.

What links tourism and labour?

Consider 'The Riviera, Exposed' by Stephen L. Harp, an excellent book about this cherished destination, visited since the 1800s by aristocrats and the well-to-do. After World War II, there was a desire to bring it to the masses, with a 'high volume-lower cost' model becoming profitable. To adapt though, the Riviera needed more hotels, infrastructure, water systems, etc. Most of the labour recruited to build all this came from North Africa, particularly Algeria while it was still a French territory. This was often presented as a reason why Algerians should stay in the French sphere, with all these labour opportunities in them. But Algeria gained independence in

1962 — and many of these workers were then no longer considered French and given no rights. The very areas they had helped build became the birthplace of the National Front (now, the National Rally) and French anti-immigrant parties. And there was a concerted effort to conceal these people, not let them establish any kind of permanent residence, herding them into camps while they were still beautifying this tourist destination. They were prevented from living in the cities where they worked, forced into shanties and when the work was finished, made to move on. This also happened in the United States where so much infrastructure, particularly in the south that attracts a lot of tourism, was built by labour which came from Mexico.



BEEN THERE, DONE THAT: Social media travel sharing in fact has a long history



TOO POOL-LITE: Hotels even serve 'floating meals'

the Caribbean and South America. When you visit, you might imagine these things, being so gleaming and pristine, were always there — but we should recognise the effort behind it was gruelling and often came from immigrant labour.

As more people document their voyages on social media now, what does it mean to be a tourist today?

Travel is a very important part of what makes us who we are — it is central to the human experience. People documenting their journeys on social media may look like a new occurrence but travel literature actually has a long pedigree. Earlier, people wrote about their pilgrimages or adventures in exotic countries in books that others read because this appealed to a desire. Such social media has a deep tradition. Obviously, it allows new bells and whistles but it retains the central point that it is deeply human to travel.

Humans always journeyed — the agricultural revolution of the last 10,000 years makes us assume our natural state is sedentary and it is exceptional to travel. But we developed fire before agriculture — that allowed us to travel safely, keeping away predators and creating comfort. Neanderthals were as smart as us with similar tools and technologies — but they didn't travel. They are rarely found far from their ancestral homes while Homo sapiens had this uncanny ability to sustain the challenges of travel — those aren't just technical, related to safety and sustenance, but also the establishment of trust or durable emotional connections with people. This is how cultures developed their traditions of hospitality, deciding if they'd be welcoming or hostile to outsiders.

If we stop traveling, we will lose an important part of who we have evolved to be — travel was a huge part of different civilisations from ancient Greece to China, many thinkers debating if it was alright to travel just to sightsee or if that was an extravagant impertinence. Many ancient travellers then decided curiosity was something that needed to be satisfied. 'Today too, when we see places or meet people and other beings on our holidays, we are participating in something central to the human experience — and in this age of burgeoning artificial intelligence, it's increasingly important to remember what it is that sets us apart.



BEYOND VISA REGIMES...

It's not just humans — animals and birds travel the world, navigating hard circumstances with breath-taking abilities. Africa's wildebeest move annually over 1,000 miles, wintering in Tanzania's Serengeti, leaving for Kenya's Masai Mara in spring, returning in November. Wildebeest travel in herds of over one million, deriving courage from numbers, facing terrifying crocodiles and lions along the way



Leatherback sea turtles are the ultimate 'foodies' — loving jellyfish, they travel between tropical beaches for prey, often swimming over 10,000 miles. Leatherbacks off North America's Pacific Coast swim up to Indonesia — one called 'Yoshi' even travelled 22,000 miles. Guided by the sun, shoreline cues, tides and a special magnetic compass, many famously arrive to nest at the very same beach they were born on before taking off again

Delicate dragonflies are hardy travellers, flying twice as far as monarch butterflies. Millions fly from south India to Africa, crossing 18,000 miles, while others travel from Canada to the West Indies. Night-time travellers, they follow songbird migration patterns, chasing the Indian monsoon to showers in Africa — remember them the next time you're enjoying some rain!



'From spaceflights to 'doom tourism', travel poses questions of philosophy — and power'

Emily Thomas is Professor of Philosophy at Durham University. She tells Srijana Mitra Das at TE about the nature of travel:

Emily Thomas is sitting in her living room, its windows giving a glimpse into the afternoon sunshine which, in an English summer, can't decide if, slipping between leafy filligree, it wants to sparkle like a diamond or gleam like green-tinted gold. Yet, as TE spoke with her, the philosopher's discussion was not about homelands but places far away.

Could she describe her work on the philosophy of travel? She replies, 'At the core was a question — has philosophy ever had anything to do with travel? As I began research, I found philosophy and travel have had lots to do with each other. They have interacted in all kinds of ways throughout history.'

Maps — the knowledge of where to go and why — are key to this interaction. How can we understand them philosophically? Thomas laughs. 'Maps are the most fascinating objects. They seem deceptively simple — a map of a city or part of a country might look like it's just telling you where the roads, buildings or hills are. But actually,' And here, her voice drops confidentially, 'So much decision-making went into what to represent on a map and how it is shown. Maps are not simple representations of the world — they are very complex depictions of what the map-maker desires to highlight. Often, the map-maker emphasises a society's power structures — that's why you see palaces, churches or temples



WHOSE GAZE IS IT ANYWAY? Travel has long been seen from a 'white male' perspective on maps, not houses of individual people.'

Is technology, with its ability to scope out every corner of Earth, altering old ways of map-making? 'Yes. Google Maps is probably the most popular online mapping service now. Again, what it does and doesn't flag says a lot about what its map-makers think is important or what they believe we consider important. So, they highlight tourist sites but not the houses of individual people. Also, unlike paper maps, online maps represent different parts of the world

in exactly the same way — you can look up the United States, the United Kingdom or India and an online map will use the same colour schemes to represent all these diverse places. That gives the illusion that all these places are much more similar than they are — they put a kind of filter over our perception of the world's complexity.'

Some parts of the world are clearly different from others though, marked by nature's most spectacular aspects. Has travel had links, both in philosophy and history, with ecology? Thomas nods emphatically. 'Yes. A lot of travel is about humans going into nature and experiencing unfamiliarity, bad weather or difficult terrain. How they navigate this embodies human approaches to nature. Throughout history, you can see how people's attitudes towards nature changed by reading their travel writing — for example, before the 17th century, many writers described mountains in negative terms like 'boils and warts upon Earth'. Then, in the late 17th century, poets, novelists and painters became enthralled by Isaac Newton's philosophy of space where Newton expounded on space being connected to God. Suddenly,

there grew this new conception of space as divine — travel writers began seeing mountains differently and started describing these as 'cathedrals to God.'

This also changed how many humans felt they could impact nature. As Thomas explains, 'In Western philosophy, people often saw nature as something they could do what they liked with, thinking God had created it for humans — around the 18th century those attitudes began to change, partly due to the American transcendentalists. People like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau began conceiving of nature as divine in itself, perhaps even the embodiment of God, and not just something God made. So, many began thinking, 'Well, nature isn't something that's just useful — we must protect it as it's inherently beautiful.' That began what is today's ecology movement where people see themselves as caretakers of nature, rather than its rulers.'

What exactly is the rather disturbingly termed 'doom tourism', linked to nature, though? Thomas replies, 'It's the idea that many beautiful places on our planet, like the Arctic, Antarctic or coral reefs, are 'doomed', largely due to climate change. The thought is, 'Well, they're perishing, we should rush to see them as quickly as we can.' The problem is, people going to these places, taking planes and leaving



CHILLING: 'Doom tourism', as in the Arctic, spotlights — and grows — climate change

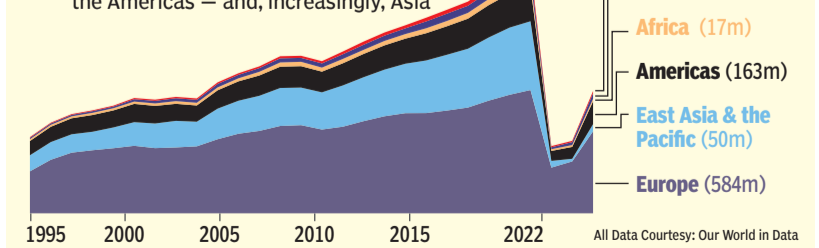
large carbon footprints, contributes to environmental problems. This produces an ethical dilemma — is it alright to visit these 'doomed' places when the very act of going there will hasten their demise? Some philosophers think we should protect these places rather than hurry their end along.'

Meanwhile, why is the interest in 'space tourism' rising — are people just bored of planet Earth? Thomas says, 'That could be one part — but what space tourism offers above many other forms of travel is exclusivity. Several people can claim to have visited the Arctic or Antarctica now — very few can say they've been to space.' Thomas pauses, thinks and then continues, 'I think another part is that we now have so much fiction, movies, documentaries and novels about what it's like to go into space. That's powered a very real human curiosity about this. Some people have also recounted how going into space can be transformative — when you're an astronaut looking down on Earth, it gives a very new perspective. It helps us realise how our planet is deeply beautiful, unique and actually unified and it should be protected. I personally would be quite curious about obtaining a perspective that seems very hard to get in any other way except literally leaving the planet and looking back on it.'

The view of the traveller is thus central — but has the idea of modern travel been shaped largely by a white male gaze? Thomas smiles ironically and says, 'Oh, yes, certainly within the West. If you look at who wrote the most historical travel books, it's almost always white men. In Europe and North America, very few women wrote about travel and even fewer people of colour did so. That's not true of other places — China and Japan have an enormous history of travel writing, also by men but not white men. That viewpoint is important to remember: Travel is about unfamiliarity and otherness. But what is unfamiliar to one may not be so to another. That defines travel — and a lot of what happens at home.'

ON THEIR OWN TRIP...

International tourist trips by region of departure show Europe in the lead, followed by tourists from the Americas — and, increasingly, Asia



All Data Courtesy: Our World in Data

READERS WRITE

Dear Times Evoke, TE's edition on gold (1st June) was pure brilliance. I felt like I was journeying through time, space and human history. The way Stephen Tuffnell connected gold to capitalism, exploitation and ecological damage changed my perspective. Then came Jun Korenaga's cosmic story — gold arriving on Earth during its fiery formation. Who knew the gold in our jewellery has come from outer space? Suddenly, the family heirloom feels...galactic. The visuals and data were fascinating. It's rare to find writing that is so intelligent, yet accessible. I love Times Evoke — you make me think, feel and learn, all in one edition, turning everyday topics into extraordinary stories.

— Rajiv Pal, Ahmedabad

I am one of your many readers who just loves this page and waits for it all week. TE is so informative. I'm a teacher and my students appreciate when I share TE with them — I wish I could capture the awe in their eyes! How gold arrived on Earth 4.5 billion years ago was a fascinating read, featuring Jun Korenaga and Simone Marchi's fabulous research.

— Archana Gupta, Lucknow

Jun Korenaga on the cosmic origins of gold was just extraordinary! It was amazing to discover the stellar processes that have created gold. There is so much to learn about our dear Earth. I kept thinking about this all day. Thank you, TE, for writing such a beautiful article.

— Mansita Mallick, Kalyani

Reading TE about the celestial origins of gold made me pause and marvel — this ancient stardust, which once blazed through supernovae, now adorns us in delicate loops. I am literally wearing a fragment of the universe itself!

— Mehak Kohli, Pune

Share your thoughts at: timesevoke@timesofindia.com
Read Times Evoke online at: www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/times-evoke