

Icefields Parkway.
 Photograph by Douglas
 Curran.

Week 9

I. The View from the Road

Recreation and Tourism

Modern tourism was born out of the application of social policies which led to industrial workers obtaining annual paid holidays, and at the same time found its expression through the recognition of the basic human right to rest and leisure.

— United Nations declaration on tourism, 1980

In the mid-1980s I took a railway trip from Toronto to Vancouver. The train, called *The Canadian*, was old and tatty and filled with grumpy American travellers who were in the country by default — Canada was a tourist destination without terrorists. But no tourist experience comes without its own logic, its own way of organizing the landscape and our sense of it. The train carried us to Vancouver, all right, but on the way it stirred us to pay belated though still sincere homage to the Canadian landscape.

The dining car was the most intact remnant of this vestigial nationalism. Called the *Queen Alexandra*, it was a royal blue ode to prairie songbirds and prairie hospitality, with wonderful etched glass dividers and stars on the ceiling. Here was a colonial nostalgia whose restraint and innocence spoke of the early 1950s, yet it was overlaid with the ruthless corporate reality of our own day: mass-produced meals and packaged travellers who probably wanted to go to Greece but ended up in Saskatchewan.

Out the window, as always, the vast land itself flitted by, so familiar from postcards but silent and untouchable from inside our glass cases. I remember wanting to get off the train at every point and lie in the sweet summer fields. While it's nice to think that my image of those fields came from within, from the memory of authentic, animated, *real* space, I know that it is also part of the repertoire of images of nature that tourist culture produces in great number and variety, and that in some ways are indistinguishable from nature itself.

Tourism organizes our experience of the world and its many aggregate cultures and landscapes. In the past fifty years or so it has become a global

phenomenon involving millions of people. It is also a big and growing industry — and the principal one for the economies of many countries and regions in the Third World. It may also be the largest industry in North America by the turn of the twenty-first century. The history of tourism is a confusing one, because no one knows quite what it is or when it started. What we can say is that its history parallels that of modern industrial society. While people travelled for pleasure before that time, and the wealthy classes of imperial Rome or China had holiday villas in the country, modern mass tourism represents a vastly different way of moving through the world. It has created a whole range of new landscapes: motel strips and campgrounds, airports, beach compounds, amusement parks, and convention centres. It has promoted the growth of a managerial class whose job it is to organize human desires and leisure time. It has extended the commodity form both out into the natural world and back into our imaginations. The Caribbean holiday, after all, is a mass-marketed product as well as a place. Like a tin of fruit cocktail, the promise of a holiday experience has been manufactured out of the material and ideological resources available to contemporary culture. The “destination,” as they say in the business, is an integral part of the identity of the Caribbean holiday product at the same time as it’s strangely irrelevant: basically, anything with sun and palm trees will do. Lastly, modern tourism is a phenomenon that is both urban and rural, and at the same time it breaks down the distinction between the two. It has vastly reorganized not only the geography of North America but also our perceptions of nature and our place in it as humans.

Tourism has more than a coincidental relationship with modern industrial society. As the 1980 United Nations declaration on tourism points out, the phenomenon is one of the byproducts of that society. Certainly one outcome of the long history of industrial capitalism has been the creation of leisure time. But leisure isn't time like any other. It's supposed to be a discretionary kind of time, different from the productive time spent at work. Leisure is a nineteenth-century idea, introduced by a culture that defined work itself as a separate sphere of life, an activity that had its own politics and increasingly its own place in the landscape. In the nineteenth century, work was still a redemptive activity. But work has changed, and so has the politics of labour. Because new technologies have eliminated certain kinds of work and made much of what's left meaningless, leisure time is increasingly the time, and creates the space, where we look for meaning in our lives. A lot of social institutions are now organized around buying, eating, or sightseeing rather than around the social bonds built through labour. It isn't always this way, of course. People also use leisure time to engage in other kinds of activities altogether: to build local cultures and communities — or simply to work in the garden.



An expressway under construction on the outskirts of Toronto in the 1960s. Sightseeing helps us make sense of a landscape continually demolished and rebuilt.

These shifts in the nature of work and leisure are also part of the history of tourism. By the mid-twentieth century, technological change in North American industry had created considerable wealth. The response of most Canadian and U.S. workers, however, was not to gain more control over the labour process — to demand shorter working hours and more time of their own, for example — but to settle for higher wages and easy credit as an entrée into the growing culture of affluence, what was usually talked about as the American way of life. The cycle of ever increasing growth and consumption became a near universal creed. Thus, during the 1950s and 1960s, the modern utopian visions of a beneficent technology ushering in a society of ease and plenty easily translated into mass desire for leisure commodities. Cars, trailers, motorboats, camping equipment, home appliances, vacation cottages, televisions — in other words, people sought out shopping centres, superstores, and everything inside them. These were the forms that leisure and tourism had taken on this continent by the middle of the present century.

The links between tourism and contemporary society are not only economic. Tourism has all along had a particular role to play in our experience of modernity. By circulating through the material and natural world, we juxtapose the many contradictions of our everyday lives and try to make them whole. When I recall my experience of the train that summer, I begin with images of dead queens and terrorists and grain elevators; then I remember the micro-waved Pacific Salmon Almandine in the Rockies, the gleaming bank towers in

Can we see something
to be done about this
thing? It's a bit of a
mess.

*Opposite:
Tourism redefines the
land in terms of leisure.
This 1950 ad promotes
Canada as a roomy, handy
place with a "foreign
atmosphere."*

Calgary, and a man fishing from a boat in the Precambrian Shield at sunset (the Korean monk in the next seat took a snapshot of him). Sometimes I read while all this was going on, and sometimes I listened to music I'd brought along. That train trip, and its many small pleasures and disruptions, somehow coalesce for me into orderly but still ambivalent images of life in Canada in the late twentieth century.

This ambivalence characterizes much of what's called modern life, and as modernity gets updated we must keep sightseeing just so we can understand our place in it. Our cultures, our landscapes, our social institutions are continually demolished and rebuilt. Each new moment of modernity promises to heal the wounds it continues to inflict, while at the same time encouraging us to imagine an open future. We tour the disparate surfaces of everyday life as a way of involving ourselves in them, as a way of reintegrating a fragmented world. Tourism is thus a thoroughly modern phenomenon. Its institutions — package cruises, museums and amusement parks, self-guided nature trails and visits to a shrine to the Virgin Mary, the grave of Wild Bill Hickok, or the site where a president was assassinated — continually differentiate and reorganize our experience of the world. One way they do this is by naming the modern and separating it off from the premodern — or the merely old-fashioned, which in contemporary culture often amounts to the same thing. Thus the tattered VIA Rail cars that hurtled us across the continent that summer were "outdated," as our U.S. visitors pointed out more than once, while Calgary was somehow "new," or in any case, different from that. The outdated is sometimes demolished (as much of it has been in Calgary) and sometimes preserved as a reference point for us, an "authentic" curiosity that reminds us of the victory of the modern over the ever receding past.

Tourism locates us in space as well as time. It has redefined the land in terms of leisure. It began to do this at a moment when most North Americans were being wrenched from traditional relations with the land. It's no accident that industrial agriculture, the spread of suburbs, and the growth of mass tourism all coincided in the mid-twentieth century.

The Roots of Nature Tourism

Nature has figured large in leisure activities since the mid-nineteenth century and the history of nature tourism provides a good sense of the history of relations between humans and the natural world over the past 150 years. It also reveals how tourism *organizes* those relations.

Nature tourism is simply the temporary migration of people to what they understand to be a different and usually more "pure" environment. It's going out to nature for its own sake, and it's all of the ways we talk about that



*Travels on U.S. National
Forest, late 1950s.*

experience. The modern history of nature tourism is a history of altered landforms and changed ideas and experiences of the non-human. Broadly speaking, it involves a shift from a pastoral approach to nature to a consumer approach. This in itself is a huge and significant transition.

In the 1850s and 1860s the parks movement got underway in the large cities of the United States and Canada. It grew out of a widespread dissatisfaction with industrial culture and its momentous effects on the landscape. This dissatisfaction was not a new sentiment in its time. The myth of nature as a lost garden permeates both the Greek and Hebraic roots of Western culture. In the nineteenth-century version of that myth, in the age of what would be called the Industrial Revolution, popular nostalgia for nature overlapped in key ways with the culture of Romanticism. Cities grew quickly, becoming crowded and polluted. Many people began to see nature as the tonic for an unhealthy urban life. In the 1850s in the United States, and somewhat later in Canada, amateur horticultural and urban reform organizations built small parks to "improve" urban life. These parks were to have a moral as well as physical function: healthy open spaces, reformers thought, would alleviate the cities' many social and physical ills. The parks movement was followed by the playgrounds movement in the last years of the century, and like the parks movement the playgrounds movement was originally a citizens' initiative, in this case largely organized by women's groups. Typically, a neighbourhood improvement association organized itself to save a vacant lot from development; the undeveloped urban land was versatile and could be devoted to play of all kinds. In the long term the social goal of the playgrounds movement was to convince the public of the beneficial aspects of play and games and see that "supervised" recreation of all types was provided for in schools and neighbourhoods. By the last years of the nineteenth century, parks in both Boston and Montreal had sand gardens for infants, ball fields and instruction in games, folk dancing, first aid, and story-telling. Outdoor organizations like the Camp Fire Girls and the YMCA date from this period.

These movements had two effects that interest us here. One was the new possibility of thinking about recreation as an activity apart from our other everyday tasks. Recreation assumed its own schedule and its own locations in the landscape. It had become a form of leisure. In the contemporary literature of the tourist industry, this is talked about as an increase in demand for outdoor experiences. At first these new activities were organized around the dominant social institutions of their day, like schools and churches, and in fact the collectivization of recreation was closely related to the collectivization of work and the formation of unions.

The other effect of these movements was a general reawakening of interest in the natural world. To be sure, it was at first a natural world shaped by the

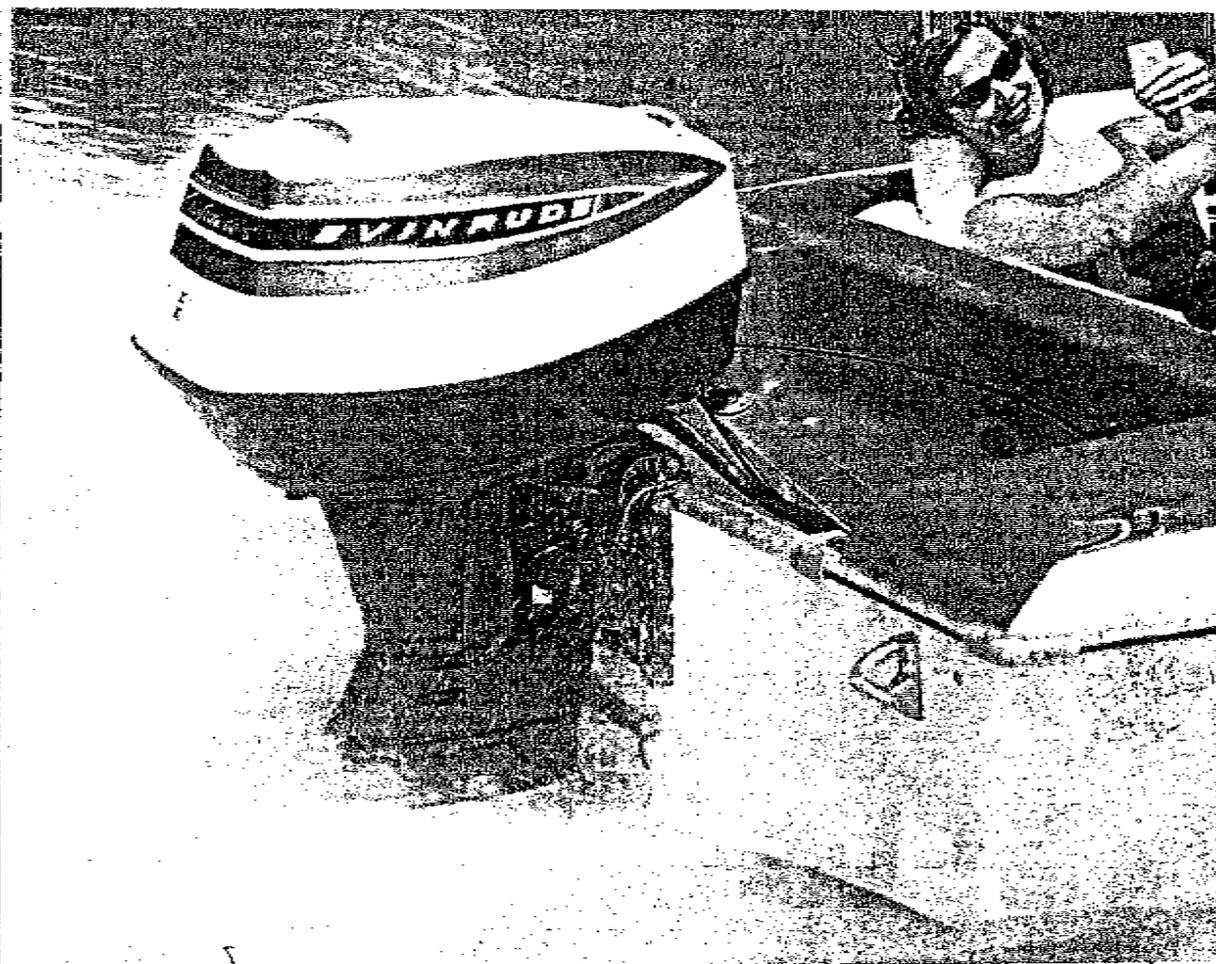
shears and spades of urban culture, for nature appreciation directly coincided with urbanization and industrialization. By the late nineteenth century, almost half of North Americans lived in cities. It was not until then — the moment that in the United States is called "the closing of the frontier" and in Canada "the opening of the West" — that wilderness itself assumed value in popular culture. In the United States, progress was measured by how far nature — and the aboriginal peoples who were often understood to be part of it — had been pushed back, and the feeling at the close of the nineteenth century, at least in the United States, was that the job was nearly done. It became possible to argue then that the wilderness had to be preserved. In Canada, where nature was not so easily pushed back, the wilderness ethic did not gain currency as quickly as in the United States.

The love of nature flourishes best in cultures with highly developed technologies, for nature is the one place we can both indulge our dreams of mastery over the earth and seek some kind of contact with the origins of life — an experience we don't usually allow urban settings to provide. Since at least the witch burnings of the sixteenth century, people of European origin have regarded nature as separate from human civilization, which makes it possible to argue for its protection. The Native peoples of North America have never shared these attitudes. For them, the natural world is not a refuge — the "other" to an urban industrial civilization — but a place that is sacred in and of itself. In Native cosmologies, human cultures are compatible with natural systems, and it is a human responsibility to keep things that way.

Recreational Resources

By the 1870s and 1880s, wealthy city-dwellers were taking curative holidays at Rocky Mountain spas and seaside resorts. At the same time, the recreational activities available to the growing middle class were also edging out of the city. Hunting and fishing and canoeing had evolved into sports, and the urban dwellers now flocking to the country on holidays encouraged this trend. Church and youth organizations established outdoor education programs as part of their regular activities. It was out of this general social matrix that the Woodcraft Indians, Boy Scouts, national parks, and modern conservation movements emerged.

Transportation technology was also key. Town squares and commons, for example, are old phenomena in North American cities, but public parks *per se* didn't show up until people could get to them on public transit. By the late nineteenth century, railroads allowed the growth of suburbs on the edges of cities and provided access to beaches and lakes well outside city boundaries. After World War I, the car propelled recreation out of the cities for large numbers of



An outboard motor ad from the 1960s. In campaigns targeting the working class, the recreation industry promoted the outdoors as a place to "get away from it all."

the middle class. By the 1950s these trends had all magnified, and country and city now bear a very different physical and philosophical relation to one another.

This general rekindling of interest in nature and the new possibilities of access to it had effects that we still feel today. As more and more people travelled to the natural areas of the continent for a "change of scene," the areas themselves ceased to be thought of solely as sanctuaries from the ills of civilization. Instead, they were now often talked about as "outdoor recreation resources" — a jargon that came out of the popular movements to preserve the parks and forests of North America for the future. The language underscored the new ways rural spaces were appended to urban cultures and to the expanding North American economy. Recreational nature became a place of leisure on weekends and summer holidays; it became attached to the schedules and personal geographies of an urban society.

Several things happened during the years following World War II. In the first place, most North Americans had a lot more money. The war had inflated

the economy, and while women were unceremoniously escorted back from factories to the hearths where they were now supposed to marshal the new armies of consumerism, men for the most part were able to move into regular employment. Many people had savings from the war, government grants were available, and if nothing else credit was easy to arrange. (Diners Club and American Express credit cards both appeared in the early 1950s.) After a long period of austerity, the 1950s was a time of exploding affluence. Families were larger and now usually included one car if not two. Leisure time was organized into discrete activities matched to the products of a leisure industry. Outdoor recreation had become a mass phenomenon. For holidays, people often went on automobile trips along new roads that reached far into the natural areas of the continent. There was a new mass market for recreational services and commodities: motels and drive-ins, both of which were around well before World War II, sprang up in large numbers along highway strips and at interchanges. Shops and chain-store catalogues were filled with outdoor equipment of every kind.

There were exceptions to this general trend. For one thing, the idea of nature as an untrammelled refuge is most attractive to cultures situated at some distance from the rural world, and whose values tend to rest on a rigid distinction between the human and the non-human. Utopias, after all, are culturally specific. Thus the non-European peoples of this continent, particularly African-Americans and Amerindians, have traditionally regarded the idea of vast nature reserves with some scepticism and bewilderment. Moreover, both of these peoples have associations with the North American soil — associations as painful as they are deep. Black slaves were imprisoned on the harsh plantations of the South, and freedom historically meant flight to the northern cities. Latinos have had a similar history in the industrial plantations of the modern sunbelt and in Puerto Rico.

Native people, on the other hand, have been explained away as savages almost to the present day. Their ancient kinship with the animals of North America has often been turned into a slur. In the early years of the U.S. national parks, especially in the Southwest, Native families were simply part of the scenery; their production of handicrafts was a popular attraction for the white tourists who were herded through Indian households as if those homes were museums. Non-white people have enjoyed very little of the immense wealth that has saturated Canadian and U.S. societies since the Second World War. For all of these reasons the postwar boom in recreation took place largely without the direct participation of non-whites — a fact usually ignored in the professional literature on the subject.

Regardless of who participated, the rapid development of a recreational infrastructure brought about a new set of relations between humans and every-

thing we call nature. While the places visited might all have existed before, people experienced them in new ways. Nature tourism catalogued the natural world and created its own spaces out there among the trees, lakes, and rocks. It sold us nature-related products, and indeed it began to sell us natural space and experiences too. All of these activities served to fragment the land: here we have a sunbathing beach, over there a nature trail for the blind, further along there's an rv(recreational vehicle) campground or a petting zoo or a "singles' crosscountry weekend." Nature tourism differentiates our experiences of the natural world, with several consequences. The most obvious is that this differentiation makes it easier to package and sell nature as a product. It also means more people can enjoy natural areas. It means that it's now more difficult to experience nature as a whole, as the total environment that for centuries and centuries has been our *home* — which is, after all, a very different kind of space from a "recreation resource."

The Car and the Road

By the 1920s the car had become a popular means of transport, and with the beginnings of a highway infrastructure intercity travel increased dramatically. Between the two world wars, the construction of surfaced roads increased four-fold. Even during the Depression of the 1930s, large-scale road construction continued unabated, often as a part of government relief programs. By the mid-1950s multi-lane parkways and freeways had been built to expedite traffic from city to suburb and city to city; and the car had insinuated itself into the daily habits and desires of millions of North Americans.

While the population of North America has roughly doubled in the past fifty years, highway travel has increased almost tenfold. The private car accounts for more than 80 per cent of all travel — 75 per cent of all tourist travel — in North America. These trends — from highway construction to car acquisition and use — have remained relatively constant for the last five decades. They are a good indication of how the automobile became the keystone of the postwar North American economy. These changes didn't happen by themselves of course; several U.S. corporations, most notably General Motors, practised ruthless marketing strategies that would ultimately ensure the car its central place in North American culture. This meant designing cars with what's now called planned obsolescence and making them the only choice for millions of commuting workers. The control over choice was achieved partly by buying up and eliminating mass-transit companies.

This is a well-known history, with consequences that most people understand. But what does it mean in terms of the landscape and our relation to it? In the first place, the car and the modern highway bring with them a different



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So have a safe, pleasant Fourth on wide, smoother-riding Asphalt Highways—remember to do your part to keep your family safe by driving the law, by driving responsibly and soberly.

ordering of space. Before the car, most roads took care of all manner of traffic. But once the car was in general use, traffic had to be functionally separated: trucks and cars from pedestrians and bicycles, local and feeder traffic from intercity travel. Expressways, for example, are usually set off on a different grade from surrounding land, and access to them is strictly controlled — changes that imply a rationalization of space. Certain roads come to have certain purposes: some are for whisking travellers and goods past places (whether urban or rural) as quickly as possible. In this case, the landscape you move through is subordinate to your destination. Other roads, such as the nature parkways begun in the 1930s, bar commercial traffic and in the design of their curves and rest areas instruct drivers about how best to appreciate the scenery out the window. In both cases, the car further divides the landscape, and our experience of it, into discrete zones. It promotes some landscapes and discourages others.

In the 1950s new road-building technologies carried more people than ever before out of the cities to play in the country. In 1944 the U.S. Congress passed the Defense Highway Act, which authorized the construction of a

An ad for the Asphalt Institute, 1950s. Road building is an essential component of modern mass tourism.

Handwritten notes:
The 1950s...
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massive national network of roads that would supposedly allow for movement of troops and materiel in case of foreign attack. In Canada, the Alaska Highway, authorized in 1948, had similar military beginnings. In 1956, U.S. workers began construction on the Interstate Highway System, aided by revenues from a gasoline tax. The tax, in fact, could only be spent on highway construction for the first sixteen years. The highways encouraged car acquisition and use, the cars in turn consumed more gas, and the tax on the gas ensured the construction of more highways. The interstate highways, completed in the mid-1980s, amounted to a massive government subsidy to the auto industry and its many dependents, including tourism.

Tourism grew by about 10 per cent annually during the 1950s and 1960s, and it was largely a tourism organized around the car and the highway. Pleasure driving had become the most popular form of outdoor recreation and for many people older forms of outdoor activities — camping, for example — became an adjunct of car travel. Car and camping technologies merged. The new highways were thus not only a measure of the culture's technological prowess but they were also fully integrated into the cultural economy. They were talked about as though they had an important democratizing role: the idea was that modern highways allowed more people to appreciate the wonders of nature.

The car also made possible the establishment of a vacation-home industry during the 1950s and 1960s. This changed the physiography of resorts in interesting ways. It used to be — and here we might recall the great nineteenth-century spas — that resorts were typed according to the natural features of the landscape they were part of. So there were mountain resorts like Banff, there were spas, ski resorts, seaside resorts, and so on. Once mass second-home building got under way in the late 1950s, resorts lost many of their ties to locale. The most obvious effect of the car on nature tourism was a large-scale diffusion of recreation across the landscape. Holiday-goers no longer took rest cures at one place, but sought out ever more distant and "unspoiled" recesses in their cars. When A-frame and other pre-fab homes replaced resorts in many people's itineraries, there was a proliferation of tourist sites, and consequently the experience of nature became more private for many people. By the mid-1960s, the resorts themselves had changed in character: either they went out of business or they adapted to the demands of a new and different clientele. Today, traveling families have been replaced by convention-goers and corporate head officers attending marketing seminars. These clients expect familiar surroundings — amenities, they're called — that are not specific to locale.

As the growth of rural tourism proceeded, the geographical focus shifted from natural features of the landscape to artificial ones such as golf courses or African animal-safari parks. The reasons for this are complex, but they had

mostly to do with the need for the industry to differentiate its products to serve a rapidly expanding market. Marine parks and Santa's Villages, whether in California or Kansas, were like so many interchangeable brands of cigarettes or pain relievers, each with its target audience. Thus scenic legitimacy came to rest partly on the marketing strategies of the tourist industry as well as the vagaries of land speculation. All of these changes led to new fields of study including tourist motivational assessment and scenery evaluation, which by the 1960s had become the subject of intense scrutiny within the industry.

Where the landscape itself was adaptable to this new industrial situation, so much the better. For example, in the forest-lake complex of much of the north-central area of the North American continent, the aesthetic values already in place coalesced with the demands of a growth industry. The two most desirable features of a woodland cottage-site are the illusion of solitude and the view out over water. In the sinuous lake and river country of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence watershed, the land is relatively flat and yet densely vegetated. There are no sweeping vistas, so the aesthetics of this landscape in its more or less wild state is built on experiencing nature in its details. The activities that make sense here are intimate, even private, like canoeing or mushrooming. Yet the geography allows for great numbers of people to have this experience of the immanent frontier all at the same time. When you add the automobile and the express highway to this equation you end up with a well-populated region of the continent colonizing large portions of the remaining bush with millions of second homes, each with its private road and intimate view.

The car is not the only vehicle that roamed the new highways of the 1950s. A related technology, the trailer, has had a profound effect on the way we move across and inhabit this continent. Originally — in the early 1930s — trailers were a kind of house on wheels, like a covered wagon for vacationers or itinerant workers. Now they're called mobile homes and they've become the predominant form of prefabricated housing. They are permanent features of the landscape, as the evolution of their town names indicates: from trailer camps to trailer parks to mobile-home estates. In the U.S. Southwest, these communities are simply called parks, and the trailers themselves are called park models. Temporary dwellings — which are an ancient phenomenon — imply a kind of freedom and have thus found a special place in the North American ideological landscape. This phenomenon is usually expressed as freedom from ties to place, to family, and to job; freedom to move across this land as we want and to make new connections with it. For people who work at migratory or temporary jobs — and today this includes work in sales or mid-management as well on farms — moving from one place to another is often a necessity. It's as if physical mobility is standing in for the dream of social mobility that North

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American society has been unable to deliver. Camping is one form of this refusal of station; so is desert retirement in a mobile home.

In any case the trailer is now something people use to tour nature (among other places) and dwell there temporarily. In fact, technologies like the trailer, and the cultures that surround them, construct nature as a place of freedom and repose. As our technical mastery over nature has progressed, the idea of nature as freedom has flourished — an idea that would be meaningless in a time or culture other than this one.

Other transportation technologies have been developed since the Second World War, and all of them have helped to transform the landscape and our perceptions of it in some way. Most fall under the name of recreational vehicle (RV), and they include the snowmobile, the off-road vehicle (ORV), the van, the camper, and so on. Many of these technologies have insinuated themselves into everyday North American life, and the social activities of clubs and vacation caravans are now often planned around them. Indeed, a new kind of campground has been designed for people who travel with recreational vehicles.

The trucking industry was also born in the postwar years — often as a result of the car companies' marketing strategies — and it too has had a curious effect on how our culture perceives nature. Before continuous streams of trucks plied highways of every size, trains carried most freight, including foodstuffs. Refrigerated train cars were first put to use in the late 1920s. As John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* documents with some bitterness, refrigeration allowed produce from warmer parts of the continent, such as Florida and California, to be shipped to large markets in the cooler regions. Like the car, however, the transport truck is a more versatile, if less efficient, technology than the train. It was able to get right into the fields and collect the avocados and grapefruit soon after they were picked. This development coincided with two others of equal import. Postwar agricultural research bred fruits and vegetables to be part of an industrial process — they could be mechanically picked, were resistant to biocides, and took well to shipping. This led to great increases in farm productivity during the 1950s. At the same time the transportation industry was consolidating itself: trucking firms began to be vertically integrated with food growers, processors, and retailers.

This is a complex tangle of changes, and there were a number of consequences. One was the replacement of local and regional market gardeners by large, often corporate growers in the new agricultural zones of the sunbelt. They in turn introduced vast amounts of biocides, with ecological effects that in many cases remain unknown today. The industrialization of agriculture — which included the development of supermarkets — also led to a homogenization of the seasons as summer produce (or some semblance of it) began to

appear in winter as well. This in turn led to a very different relation between the culture and the geography and climate of North America. The land began to look and feel different. As models of domination began to flourish in North American cultures in the 1950s — and the industrialization of agriculture was mirrored by the U.S. military policy of the time — it became possible to think of nature as a servant, or a well-loved pet. It also became possible to think of nature as a victim — a sentiment that underlay much of the thinking of the environmentalist movement in its earliest years.

The Blue Ridge Parkway

The car also had a more instrumental effect on the landscape. Most obviously, it brought massive environmental change in the form of roads, traffic, and deteriorating air quality. These all have had their own secondary and tertiary effects, most of them bad if not catastrophic. But much less discussed are the aesthetic and psychological changes the car has brought to land forms and our perception of them.

Once the roads were full of cars, there had to be a physical infrastructure to service them. Thus we get the creation of the strip: gas stations, roadside motels and drive-ins, coffee shops, muffler franchises. These came with their own logic. Highway businesses had to design their buildings and advertising to attract motorists. Recognition from the road became paramount, and this led to the spread of the franchise business and use of standardized images and eventually logos in advertising, both on and off-site. Consider the repetitive architectures of chains like Howard Johnson's or the Holiday Inn, or indeed of national parks. Tourist services had to be built on a scale compatible with the automobile. Large signs and façades and small cheaply constructed buildings were the lessons learned from Las Vegas. Motorized access and parking lots became necessary adjuncts to every new building, whether souvenir shop or campground office. These in turn were often "naturalized" by planting gardens around them; and work like this became the bread and butter of the newly prosperous profession of landscape architecture. A roadside coffee shop or gas station was transformed into an oasis in the midst of the created deserts of parking lot and highway. Similarly, driveways and garages — and the reappropriated ranch architectures they complemented — contributed to the sprawling character of postwar urban design. More recent architectures like shopping malls turn inward from their parking lots, towards the retreats of indoor gardens. The roadside environments of just thirty years ago are now largely in decay.

The car imposed a horizontal quality on the landscape as well as architecture. The faster we drive, the flatter the earth looks: overpasses and cloverleaf interchanges are almost two-dimensional when seen from the car window.

There is a trade-off with regard to what is seen from the road. As the car became the primary mode of transport, the landscape became more two-dimensional.

They are events in automotive time. As highway and tourist space has become more homogenized — like the universal space of modern communications — distance is experienced as an abstraction: suburbs lie “minutes from downtown,” and the miles per gallon we achieve getting to them quantify field and stream. Compare this experience of the landscape with that suggested by aerial photography, which wasn’t really accessible to people outside the military until the 1960s. Seen from a plane window the landscape flattens out to something like a map: it is a landscape of fact (or to the military, of secrets). With more advanced satellite photography, the landscape has been inscribed with representations of resources — healthy crops, or deposits of subsurface minerals, or Cuban missile bases. The image of the Earth from space, and its Whole Earth counterpart, are extensions of this impulse to picture the planet as a resource. But in the 1950s, travellers weren’t yet able to perceive this factual landscape. What we saw out the window of the speeding car — the Futurists were right after all, it is one of the great experiences of modern life — was the future itself. Consider the thrill of entering New York along the Henry Hudson Parkway or Vancouver crossing the Lion’s Gate Bridge. The speeding car is a metaphor for progress. It is always moving ahead — although the effect is the opposite, as if the landscape were moving past us, into the inconsequential shadows of history. In this very limited respect, time has replaced space as the predominant way our experience of the world is organized.

These effects are somewhat more attenuated in the design of nature roads. The best examples of these are in the national parks, although parkways, as they are often called, are prominent features of the working landscapes of eastern North America. The Hutchison River, Merritt, and Taconic parkways in Westchester County and the lower Hudson River watershed are good examples of the long-distance and commuter type; the shorter Gatineau, Niagara, and Thousand Islands parkways in Ontario or the Seventeen-Mile Drive in California function more strictly as nature appreciation roads for tourists. These parkways are designed to present nature to the motorist in a way that sanctifies the experience of driving through it. Nature can’t really be said to be sacred in this culture, but nature appreciation comes close to being a sacred activity. The entrances to parks are important in establishing the terms of this activity and in defining the relationship between “natural” and “artificial” space.

My favourite nature road is the Blue Ridge Parkway in the southern Appalachians, one of the supreme public landscapes of the New Deal period. It was begun during the Depression as a job-creation project and link between the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks. Managed by the National Park Service, it is 470 miles long and built along the crest of five mountain ranges in Virginia and North Carolina. The road was designed as a

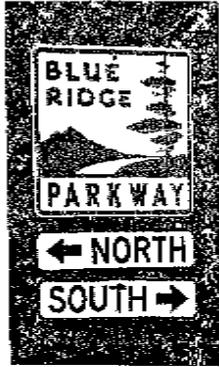
rural national parkway restricted to leisure traffic; local residents call it The Scenic, because it bypasses towns and other commercial landscapes.

The Blue Ridge Parkway pioneered many of the techniques of landscape management taken up by the tourist industry in the 1950s and after. One of these techniques is signage: like railroads, the Parkway is periodically marked by mileposts, their purpose being to orient motorists *vis-à-vis* their itineraries and to aid road maintenance and administration. Talked about in the original plans as a way of relieving monotony, the mileposts also introduce the notion of progress to the motorist’s experience of the landscape; the miles tick off as nature unfolds magnificently before us. The Parkway has a logo — a circle enclosing a roadway, a mountain peak, and a wind-swept white pine — and like all logos it is repeated. Other road signage, especially at the entrances, is standardized to underline the special quality of this created environment. Gouged wood signs point out road elevations, local history, and the names of distant features of the landscape. Other diversions organize the motor tour: parking overlooks, short hiking trails, local museums, campgrounds, and parks spaced every thirty miles. In this way, the planners designed tourist movement into the land itself. All of these management strategies are today a very common part of the tourist economy.

The Parkway is a prototypical environment of instruction, and this has become as typical of modern tourism as it was of New Deal public works projects. The Parkway’s landscape architect, Stan Abbott, had worked on the Westchester parkways. In the southern Appalachians he wanted to create “a museum of managed American countryside.” One objective was to reclaim and preserve marginal mountain lands. Another was to create a landscape pleasing to the motorist, which involved using the land in a way that would “make an attractive picture from the Parkway.”

To the planners, some land adjoining the Parkway was decidedly not a pretty picture, especially the shacks and worn-out farms of hillbillies — an outsider’s term for the impoverished whites of the southern Appalachians. In some cases, these people were moved elsewhere, out of sight, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Resettlement Act. Abandoned homesteads were planted over with native succession species and made into parks. In other areas the Parkway administration bought “scenic easement rights” from local landowners or allowed farmers to work Parkway lands.

In both cases, land use was restricted to activities compatible with a Parkway aesthetic. The planners encouraged split-rail fences, grazing cows, or sheep but not abandoned cars or, for that matter, weeds. This policy encouraged soil and watershed conservation; the ecological education of local residents was a high priority with Parkway administrators, who liberally dispensed the



The logo of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and North Carolina.

fertilizers and agricultural advice of the day. The policy also allowed the road's designers control over the verges — the place the car driver's eye first comes to rest after scanning the pavement. These were planted in a pastoral style — the meadows and groves that have been equated with naturalism ever since the great landscape parks of eighteenth-century England. Today almost the only communities visible from the road are the native plant communities established by Stan Abbott's staff and crews, who were early restorationists: rich and perfumed copses of red maple, rhododendron, flowering dogwood, Carolina hemlock, and white pine flourish as they probably haven't since the arrival of European civilization. That civilization locally, meanwhile, has been removed from view, apparently incompatible with nature.

Control over the verges also allowed the landscape designers to organize the vistas. They screened inappropriate views. They designed curves that restricted speeds to thirty-five or forty miles an hour and placed those curves in a way that organized the long looks. Since the road follows mountain crests for most of its length, distant views tend to be views down over deep valleys and countless ranges receding into the blue distance. Motorists feel like they are at the top of the world, and they share this new universe with the car. The designers have organized this national public landscape around the private car and the private consumption of nature.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is landscape management at its most accomplished. Driving along it is a beautiful and exhilarating experience. I think the pleasure of the experience can be attributed to three strategies that the road's planners adopted. The first strategy was to control virtually everything within the field of vision. The organizing poles of this field are verge and horizon, and the road successfully manages the natural and cultural landscapes that fall within it. Control over the cultural landscape has been a matter of instruction and public relations. The new culture of tourism instructed motorists in how to appreciate nature from the car; farm agents, social workers, doctors, and the Parkway's local newsletter, the *Mileposts*, coaxed destitute Appalachian peoples into modern national life. Once this education took place, mountain cultures could be reinserted into the Parkway motorist's field of vision. In the early 1960s, "Hillbilly Shows" were performed for tourists on the edges of the road. Men in crooked hats and women in long, flowered dresses with holes in them played music and demonstrated whisky stills and other putative trappings of a culture in dissolution. By the 1970s, these people had gone — to Beverly Hills perhaps — and in their place state and federal governments built craft museums.

The second, related strategy of the Parkway was an aesthetic one: separate productive and non-productive landscapes. In this aesthetic, nature is best appreciated "on its own." The road allows no trace of commercial society, save

for the occasional nostalgic glimpse of a farm or mill, the shadow of economies that have given way to the single economy of tourism.

The third strategy, and the overriding one, is the production of nature itself. All of the road's design features organize our experience of nature. The result is that nature appears to produce itself with no apparent relation to the cultures that inhabit it, or used to. Magnificent vistas now happily present themselves to us without the clutter of human work and settlement. The seasons begin to be synchronized with the tourist calendar: June is Rhododendron Time, autumn is Fall Foliage Time, winter is a Wonderland.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was built as a landscape of leisure, with both an aesthetic and economic component. The road's pictorial composition of Eastern woodland, lake, and stream would remain the symbolic landscape of U.S. leisure society until well into the 1960s. As federal and local governments built parks in nearly every state, driving and camping became part of the modern tourist economy as well.

The car itself was increasingly laden with technology in the postwar years, and some of these devices accentuated the kinds of changes underway. Air conditioning was the most obvious. It began to be sold as a feature of a few luxury cars in the mid-1950s and soon became a sign of status, especially in climates where it was unnecessary. Of course, as more asphalt was laid down and more engines circulated, roadside temperatures rose, and air conditioning often did become a necessity even in temperate climates. High-speed cars also encouraged the use of air conditioning.

In a car or a building, air conditioning allowed the illusion of human control over environment. This was made possible by the "magic" of what was understood to be a benign technology. Of more interest to us here is the aesthetic effect of air conditioning on the natural world. Nature was now even more something to be appreciated by the eyes alone. Never mind the dust and heat or the snow, nature was now accessible year-round and under any circumstances. There were no longer any contingencies — just the purely visual experience that lay outside the picture window. The other senses were pushed further to the margins of human experience as nature came to play a role in human culture that was at once more restricted and infinitely expanded.

Although car travel is largely an *individual* activity, this is not to say that people usually drive alone, although for commuters and truckers that tends to be the case. It's more that driving is a private exercise, whether done alone or with company. It is a technology that fits well with the North American psyche, and Detroit has done its best to manipulate this. The individual hero on

A 1955 ad for air conditioning. Protected by the palm of a businessman, this nuclear family is enjoying "the invigorating climate of freedom."



At the touch of a finger— man-made climate that's better than nature's

Since the beginning of history, man has tried to "do" something about the weather around him. His problem: to keep warm in the winter, or keep cool in the summer, and to keep healthy all year round.

Man-made climate has been the goal of America's air conditioning industry since the first factory cooling units were installed in 1902. Now, a half century later, new ways have been found to heat, cool, filter, dehumidify, cleanse, and circulate the air that people breathe in houses, offices, factories.

Central air conditioning in the home has a bright future. Thousands of units have already been installed. Leading builders and manufacturers

predict that within five years complete temperature control units will be included in most new homes. The room air conditioner with a reverse cycle which permits either heating or cooling of the area served, as well as the electrostatic air cleaner, are two recent developments which will create new demands for air conditioning equipment.

Today, there are plants on the drawing board for an entirely air conditioned shopping center — in-

cluding sidewalks and public areas — all to be served by a central plant. Total annual sales of the industry are expected to skyrocket to \$5 billion within the next decade.

The air conditioning industry is playing a big part in America's growth and achievement. It is another demonstration of how the invigorating climate of freedom stimulates business to progress and accomplishment in which all the people share.

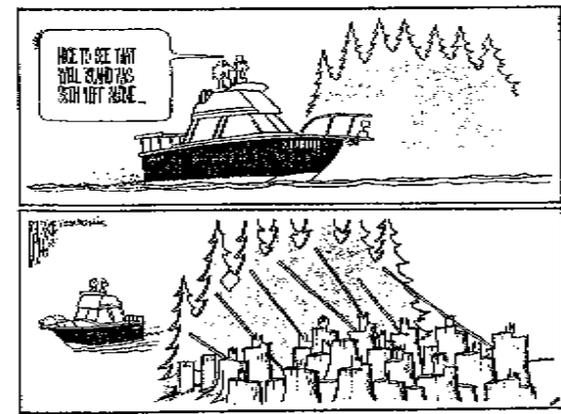
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the road, pushing back the frontiers and discovering this land for "himself": this myth has a long and bloody history, particularly in American culture, and the car continues to play a part in it. It's hard to imagine a technology that better discourages communal activity and an egalitarian experience of the non-human world. After all, the private car and the nuclear family have a parallel history. They are both founded on an act of exclusion. Within is radically different



Tourism developed side by side with the resource industry. "Multiple-use" policy has often resulted in poorly-resolved conflicts — such as at Haida Gwaii along the British Columbia coast.

from without. The family and the car — and the family car — are bounded entities that discourage unregulated exchange.

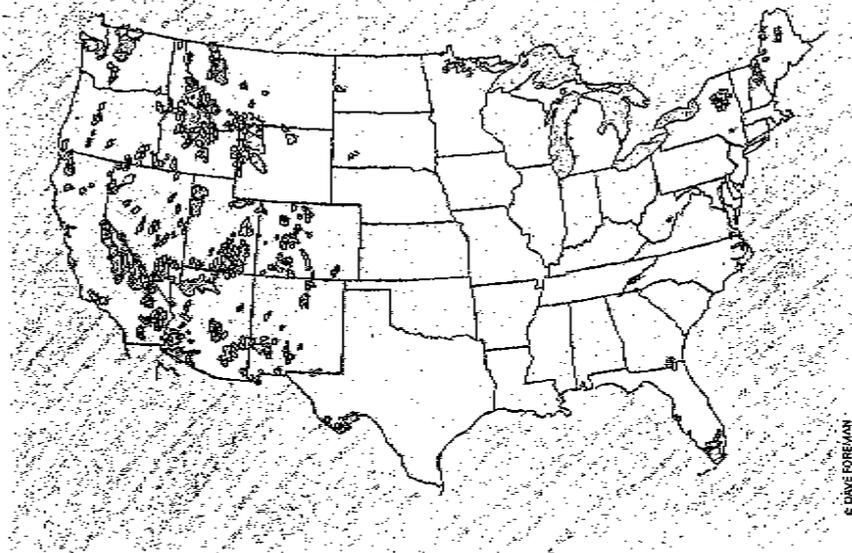
The mobility the car has brought to North American society has contributed greatly to the restructuring of the traditional nuclear family. Its privatizing functions have been splintered by cultural practices like hitchhiking or drive-in movies. The car has also given kids the freedom to get out, put some miles between themselves and the home. It has carried many North Americans, myself included, far away from the consumer culture that engendered it, and into closer contact with the natural world.

Conserve — and Develop

Like tourism and cars, the histories of tourism and conservationism are closely connected. The conservation movement in North America began in the late nineteenth century as a moral crusade to conserve "wilderness" — places supposedly uncontaminated by the physical traces of humanity, meaning people of European origin. As an expanding industrial infrastructure began to extract more and more raw materials from the land, the movement demanded regulation and protection of wild areas for non-industrial uses. In hindsight, those non-industrial uses have by and large turned out to be tourism.

By the early twentieth century, both the Canadian and U.S. governments had adopted conservation strategies as part of what they understood to be the efficient management of natural resources. At first many people saw this project as incompatible with the protection of wild lands for aesthetic reasons. But in time — and the watershed years were the tenure of Gifford Pinchot at the newly created U.S. Forest Service during the Theodore Roosevelt administration — the consensus, at least among the elite sectors of the population, was that tourist development and resource exploitation could be complementary. In Canada, tourist development and mining were part of the mandate of the national parks from the beginning: the government created Banff National Park as an agreed-upon part of the development portfolio of the Canadian Pacific railroad.

A map showing the remaining roadless areas in the U.S. that are larger than 20,000 hectares east of the Rockies, and 40,000 hectares west of the Rockies. There is no area in the continental United States further than 21 miles from a road. Tourism and resource extraction have had a severe impact on these roadless areas, many of which are parks.



Like all social movements, nature conservationism has had both reactionary and radical moments. In general, the state has adopted conservation measures consistent with its own interests, including the "wise use" of timber, water, grazing, mineral, and, later, recreation resources in the more remote parts of the continent. Conservationism became a matter of resource management — an expedient measure ensuring the greatest return on investment for what is usually called the foreseeable future. There are several other strains of conservationism historically, and all of them have grown up alongside tourism when they haven't actually promoted it. The principal ones include: animal welfare, an anti-cruelty movement that originated in England in the nineteenth century; nature appreciation, an off-shoot of art appreciation with roots in the same era; biological conservationism, which seeks the protection of endangered species of plants and animals from land development of all kinds; and preservationism, which argues for setting aside nature in reserves, protected "for all time" from human manipulation, places that will function as a eulogy for what industrial civilization has destroyed.

Today the outlines of this history are hotly debated within the environmental movement, which inherited conservationism from its various constituencies. The organizers, spokespeople, and gurus of the early movement — Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Ernest Thompson Seton, Rosalie Edge, James Harkin, Grey Owl, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson, among many

others, are also the subjects of considerable debate, alternatively claimed and rejected by the various streams of contemporary ecological thought.

What we can say about these early nature philosophies — aside from the fact that they have been largely ineffective even on their own terms — is that they are reductionist. They invariably understand nature to be good and civilization — or, in the formulation of deep ecology, humans — bad. This is hardly the basis for a politics of social change.

While conservation politics and nature tourism nourished one another, the growth of a tourist industry was contingent upon a substantial contribution by the state. Early recreation advocates had campaigned for government involvement in initiating and promoting outdoor activities, and governments began making this commitment around the time of the First World War. Governments at all levels started to acquire parkland, build recreational facilities, draw up wildlife regulations, and write resource-management policies. They zoned cabin and cottage lands to control development, supervised boating activities, inventoried land, drew up maps, and in general began to divide up the continent according to how humans used it: resource extraction, farming, recreation, wilderness, and so on. In 1924 the U.S. government held its first National Conference on Outdoor Recreation in Washington, D.C. Many Canadians attended.

In the United States, the years of the New Deal saw the development of recreation facilities everywhere. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration embarked on a massive program to build a national public landscape. They organized unemployed workers into what was basically a military life. Crews of one hundred men and more constructed parkways, playgrounds, rose gardens, campgrounds, arboretums, parks, and lodges, as well as roads, bridges, and public buildings. The landscape work was sturdy, and much of it remains today. Its rough and earnest design reveals the moral underpinnings of the formative years of the recreation movement: these were environments meant to build character through hard work and wholesome play. Work camps organized by the Canadian government during the same years carried out similar projects, although on a much smaller and less ambitious scale.

The Tourist Industry

There were other exemplary landscapes. In the 1930s the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) began to build immense reservoirs in the southern Appalachians. The TVA justified these projects by referring to increases in population and energy consumption and to the need for large-scale public recreation sites. But

the reservoirs were also a chance to put the new techniques of flood control, hydro generation, and irrigation into operation.

During the same period, the Civilian Conservation Corps built summer camps for inner city kids — one of them, Camp David in Maryland, is now the weekend retreat of U.S. presidents. The National Park Service promoted these camps to the tourist industry as Recreation Demonstration Areas. In 1936 Congress passed the Park, Parkway and Recreation Area Act, which provided funds for much new construction.

All of these projects involved creating new spaces and new organizations to manage those spaces. As the tourist industry became more sophisticated, designers made sure that travel became a part of the landscape itself. Scenic car routes, photo opportunities, campground layouts — these built spaces have become part of our experience of nature. Thus the booming recreation and tourist organizations of mid-century — which would include older groups like the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, and the YMCA as well as professional organizations like the National Recreation Association, the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, and self-organized clubs for canoeists, trailer owners, gardeners, birdwatchers, and flyfishers — produced new landscapes, and new aesthetics of nature.

It is the mission of any bureaucracy to shape its project according to the internal needs of the organization. Promotional strategies tend to influence our experience of the places and activities they advertise. So do development schemes to maximize public use. Natural beauty, for example, was inevitably quantified as a result of applying bureaucratic and industrial models to the landscape. Industry consultants encouraged landowners considering tourist development to list the "natural attractions" of their sites: was there a marketable topography such as a seashore or trout stream? Were there unusual geological formations, or perhaps Indian ruins? "Scenic value" soon came to be a monetary concept as well as an aesthetic one. All of these developments contributed to the institutionalization of tourism. Sightseeing was no longer an individual activity, at least not in the eyes of those in the business. It was the organized mass consumption of familiar landscapes. Facilities had to be standardized and the "tourist object" — in this case an idea of nature — transformed into recognizable terms. As we'll see, this involved the creation of many new landscapes.

Although much private recreational resource development got started with state assistance — and the state still heavily subsidizes the tourist industry, when you take into account the public funds spent on facilities like convention centres, corporate sports stadiums, and the infrastructures that support them — by the 1950s private tourist development began to outstrip government initiatives. The governments of the day produced publications that outlined how to

construct private campgrounds or design summer camps for kids. Other pamphlets suggested hunting policies for industrial landowners, or encouraged farmers and ranchers to add recreational enterprises to their existing operations. Most U.S. agencies made money available for either public or private development of these facilities. These agencies were often concurrently working on improved resource exploitation strategies; as we've seen, tourism and resource management have gone hand in hand for most of this century (although not without many problems). This relationship was made official in the multiple use policy adopted by most government agencies throughout the continent in the late 1950s.

Tourism involves a massive conceptual reorganization of the landscape. Lands once productive in a traditional industrial or agricultural sense were reclassified as recreational zones. Marginal cattle-raising operations, for example, got turned into fishing camps or dude ranches; dairy farms became tourist farms or bed-and-breakfasts; in more recent years, agricultural lands near cities have been turned into sod farms, golf courses, and theme parks. One of the historical functions of tourism, then, is to be a kind of parasite feeding off sectors of the economy that seem to have become superfluous.

Nature tourism grew enormously in the postwar years and, as in other parts of the economy, the industry had to run to keep up with it. For most middle-class North Americans, car holidays had become the norm. By 1960, 75 per cent of U.S. families owned at least one car, and these now brightly coloured vehicles filled the new highways on weekends and during the summer months. A mass market developed for recreational services and commodities; by the late 1950s annual sales in this sector had reached \$5 billion in the United States. Shops and chain-store catalogues were suddenly full of outdoor equipment of every kind, much of it making use of the new plastics being pioneered by the petrochemical industry. Among the most significant commodities were the lighter, more easy to use cameras and, later, colour film. The snapshot and colour slides structure the postwar experience of nature. Colour, which by the mid-1950s was common in magazine ads and movies, gave images of nature added authenticity. At the moment of the greatest estrangement between North American culture and the natural world, nature opened up as real space, luring us back with saturated reds and greens.

Governments were quick to lend additional support to the new economy. In 1958 President Eisenhower appointed the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, chaired by Laurance Rockefeller. Its mandate was to gather data on The Great Outdoors and the people using it and thereby help produce a comprehensive national policy on recreational lands. It released its twenty-seven volumes of recommendations in 1962. A similar study, the

Canadian Outdoor Recreation Demand Study, released reports in 1967, 1969, and 1972. The reports from both commissions suggested that outdoor recreation, far from being a fad, was a component of the national character. The powers that be saw recreational land as critical not only for economic reasons but also because, as the ORRRC put it, "The outdoors is part of what is and was America, and it's being lost." U.S. citizens needed the outdoors more than ever, the report continued, since most people now lived in cities and suburbs rather than on farms. This was much the same as the argument of the recreation and parks movements in the late nineteenth century: people need to escape the everyday urban setting and experience a change in scenery where they would have a different relation to nature. Now these needs were felt to be even more critical. The contradictory recommendations of both Canadian and U.S. commissions were basically this: conserve what was left of natural areas, and develop them for maximum enjoyment by all.

These government commissions hired demographers, geographers, sociologists, and other consultants to come up with ways the tourist industry might adapt to the new situation; and the industry in turn took up many of their recommendations in the expansionary years of the 1960s and early 1970s. The tourist industry began to take a more active role in developing both markets and destinations. In other words, where vacationers once considered a holiday in the countryside, they might now consider many different holiday experiences in many different kinds of places. In a report for the ORRRC in the early 1960s, anthropologist Margaret Mead suggested that the category "family vacation" was quickly becoming outdated. She said that planners ought to be considering what children's holidays might be, and how to entertain adolescents now drifting "aimlessly" around the new suburbs. She wondered if there might not be a vacation market for single women, or "minorities," or "foreigners." And — Americans are always thinking ahead — what might be the recreation possibilities in outer space?

In some ways the culture had already made these distinctions. Men had long since had their own fishing and hunting trips, and the outdoors was still largely identified with what were widely understood to be masculine qualities. The identification of women with nature and the biological would be strictly interpreted until the 1960s: their domain was the physical and social reproduction of the species, and most of that was supposed to happen indoors. For the most part outdoor space for women continued to be confined to the garden and places (like playgrounds) associated with childrearing.

But, in the past thirty years, as families and gender identities have splintered, so too has the social organization of recreational space. Resorts like Club Med or Leisure World cater to specific consumer profiles generated by market

research. So does a place like Eco-Village in North Carolina, run by *The Mother Earth News*, a back-to-the-land magazine begun in the 1960s. Most tourist destinations now include a choice of specialized environments: picnic sites, swimming pools, souvenir shops, nature trails, hard surfaces for organized games, places of solitude. The industry has diversified outdoor sports too: ice sailing, windsurfing, jogging, skindiving, hang-gliding, snowmobiling — these have all been developed to meet what the industry talks about as new recreation desires. Not all market research has resulted in the creation of new environments, however. Studies done in the mid-1960s indicated that foreign tourists, especially Europeans, were most interested in the expansive nineteenth-century landscapes celebrated in Western movies. These are the spaces embalmed in the national parks of the West. This desire for the primitive — which has always included aboriginal cultures, however they're constructed in the popular imagination — has become more pronounced in recent years.

The boom in nature tourism of the 1960s brought to a head some of the contradictions inherent in public policies that encouraged both nature conservation and tourist development. Debates around this issue were common in the early years of the modern environmentalist movement. For some, the debate was resolved by the creation of another legal category of land. In the United States, the Wilderness Act of 1964 gave wide statutory protection to designated roadless areas that were over 2,025 hectares in size. The government usually continued to honour prior resource-extraction rights and activities on these lands, which has neutralized the law's effect in many areas of the U.S. West. Both the U.S. and Canadian governments passed similar legislation in the 1960s, naming endangered animal species and setting out national environmental policies.

But a review of the environmental legislation of the past twenty years — which would require a book in itself — doesn't begin to address the deeper cultural changes that were underway during that time. Public attitudes towards nature — or the environment, as it has come to be known — have shifted considerably. Nature tourism is not what it used to be. Consider the encounter of the contemporary tourist with other animals. It used to be that animals were hunted and killed as part of the (male) tourist experience of the outdoors. While sport hunting is still practised today, it has a deservedly bad name. Photographing animals has become the preferred trophy-taking activity, especially if the beasts can be "captured" on film in a wild setting. In 1977 a U.S. Forest Service report concluded that by the year 2000, "The primary use of wildlife resources will change from hunting to non-consumptive uses like photography and observation." This is what present-day "ecological safaris" are about. The photograph documents a vanishing species at the same time that it authenticates the nature experience. The animals are temporarily "preserved" on film for the enjoyment

of the maximum number of sightseers, including the reluctant friends who end up viewing the vacation slides and movies.

In the 1970s, the expansionary days of the tourist industry began to wane. But by that time the industry had consolidated itself. Alternating cycles of over-expansion and crisis favoured large operators. Almost gone were the mom and pop motels and the family riding-stables that had done so well during the days of the circuit tour by auto. The prestige products were now capital intensive — multifaceted “destinations” like Disney World became the industry model. Tourism was no longer so much about service provision as it was about the mass production and management of sightseeing experiences.

The growth of the tourist industry had produced an enormous infrastructure. Professional planners and bureaucrats, advertising consultants, graphic designers, and cost-benefit analysts were all a seemingly necessary part of the industry, turned out by faculties of leisure studies and courses in hospitality management. The industry had vertically integrated agents, tour operators, carriers, and destinations. Its publicity and marketing had become highly sophisticated, using strategies such as demographics and psychographics invented by Madison Avenue in the 1960s. The mass-marketed package tour sold the tourist experience as a single commodity, concentrating activity in a smaller number of well-produced locales. These “place-product packages,” as they’re known in the industry, aim for total design of buildings, landscape, services, signage, and spin-off products. In the well-managed business, these tourist sites become industrial plants whose goods are aesthetic experiences and hospitality services. All of these strategies have made good use of the photographic image, now an integral part of most people’s experience of the outdoors.

Research in leisure studies has been responsible for many of these changes. In the 1960s, social scientists and management consultants produced volumes of

studies related to tourism. Favourite topics of the day were destination perception and scenery evaluation. A good place to look for some of this work is the *Journal of Leisure Research*, published in the United States by the National Recreation and Park Association. The first issue, published in the winter of 1969, featured an article on how to develop a model for testing people’s landscape preferences. By quantifying responses to photographs of different landscapes, park and recreation planners could determine which “landscape features” should be purchased, developed, or preserved. The industry could then locate a scenic road or hiking trail, for example, in a way that would maximize visitor pleasure. Subsequent issues of the journal have pursued this research logic: one article draws up a typology of campers according to motivating factors; another talks about measuring eye pupillary response to landscapes — when they see a trout stream, for example, do male eyes dilate more than female eyes?

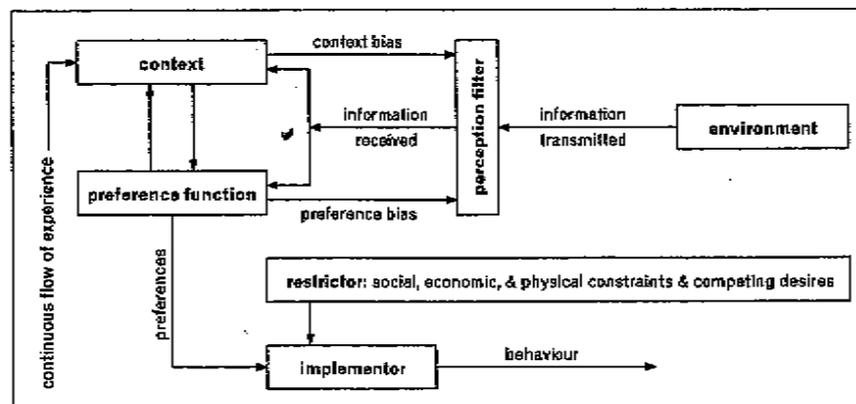
Other research has aided the administration of natural lands and control over the organisms within them. U.S. government studies have recommended certification of wilderness users, the use of robots for park maintenance, and the captive rearing of endangered species “rather than rely on natural reproduction.” Thanks to researchers, we now know the maximum noise levels for optimum human enjoyment of national parks. They’ve also come up with statistics on the carrying capacities of ecosystems, which presumably help determine the maximum human presence those areas will tolerate. They have studied the further penetration of technology into recreation areas: the possible development of personal hovercraft and helicopters, as well as jet-powered backpacks. Scientists have invented remote sensing devices that monitor animal migrations in some areas and could be used to monitor park use by humans as well.

All this work has implications for the experience of nature, especially when we consider that the mass media, and the vast numbers of images they produce, are part of the modern environment. For example, contemporary tourist research indicates “pre-trip anticipation” is one of the key determinants of a tourist’s satisfaction with a holiday destination. The images of the holiday produced by the industry must entice the potential traveller but at the same time they must preclude the cultivation of false expectations. Obviously, not just any picture of Lake Louise will do.

Tourism: From the Recreational to the Social

Today, recreational opportunities, as they’re called, are produced almost exclusively by government agencies or transnational corporations — at least at the level of investment. Development decisions are taken in the board rooms of the metropolis and rarely take into account the nature of local communities or working landscapes. Because tourism is largely about the experience of

Graphs like these are supposed to help planners predict people’s responses to a “visual recreational environment.”



difference — whether it's cultural or geographical — the industry has played an important role in the globalization of Western industrial culture.

This leads to fascinating paradoxes. Industrial logic demands standardization, yet we've come to define natural settings in part by their uniqueness. The result has been an increasing production of natural attractions. For a long time now our culture of nature has typed certain topographies and climates — mountains, coastlines, islands, exotic or fragile ecosystems — as special places. But inevitably, even in culturally valorized scenic places, certain elements have to be rearranged to meet tourist expectations. In the game preserves of East Africa, for example, the elephants or lions must be visible and uncontained when the sightseers go by in their tour buses, and preferably the beasts will be eating other animals. But we don't want other buses full of tourists angling for good photos crowding the scene and causing a distraction. Native human communities, moreover, might or might not be an acceptable component of the safari experience. If they are acceptable they're perhaps best presented in traditional, that is, archaic, dress.

Or consider the case of Prince Edward Island. It has a tourist identity as a regional, working landscape. Here, the story goes, the old values predominate: family farms, picturesque villages, benign seascapes. The cosmopolitan tourist requires authentic space: Prince Edward Island should look "distinctive," which in this case means anachronistic. Town buildings should be restored to their original state; rural vistas should conform to the standard image of a bucolic potato-growing backwater. Tacky motels and drive-ins, on the other hand, should be discouraged.

These needs have led to fascinating conflicts with the people who live on Prince Edward Island, for the elite taste of the educated tourist is often insensitive to the vernacular design of the local inhabitant. In the mid-1970s a controversy arose over billboards and abandoned cars along the highways. Tourists found they detracted from the island's identity; islanders considered them part of their culture. Another conflict involved the traditional applications of manure on the fields. Tourist organizations lobbied to have manure use prohibited near highways — its smell was apparently not part of the repertoire of bucolic experience. Because the modern tourist has been constructed as a guest rather than a client, islanders have found it difficult to oppose these changes without breaching the hospitality norms of their culture.

Other recent developments in tourism continue the earlier trends towards diversification of the industry. Sport tourism and earthquake and disaster tourism are obvious examples. Self-catering, another trend, means that tourists provide



Signs for scenic drives on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

many of their own services, such as food or accommodation, while they travel. The most common form of self-catering is to travel in a RV, fixing your own meals and making your own bed. Since you carry most of your household with you in a RV, all you require is a parking lot close to the highway with a place to dump your sewage and maybe a play area for the kids. More sophisticated RV sites have club houses and swimming pools, laundry facilities, video games, hot showers, and cable-TV hookups at the campsite: all the conveniences of home.

Private campground chains like KOA have been a familiar part of the landscape for some time now, but franchises of time-sharing campgrounds and cabins are a more recent phenomenon. For an initial investment, often on the order of \$6,000, you can buy a 200-year membership in a camping club. In one club this entitles you (and your heirs!) to use the club's private campgrounds for a fee as long as the lease holds, at which time the "vacation license" reverts to the developer.

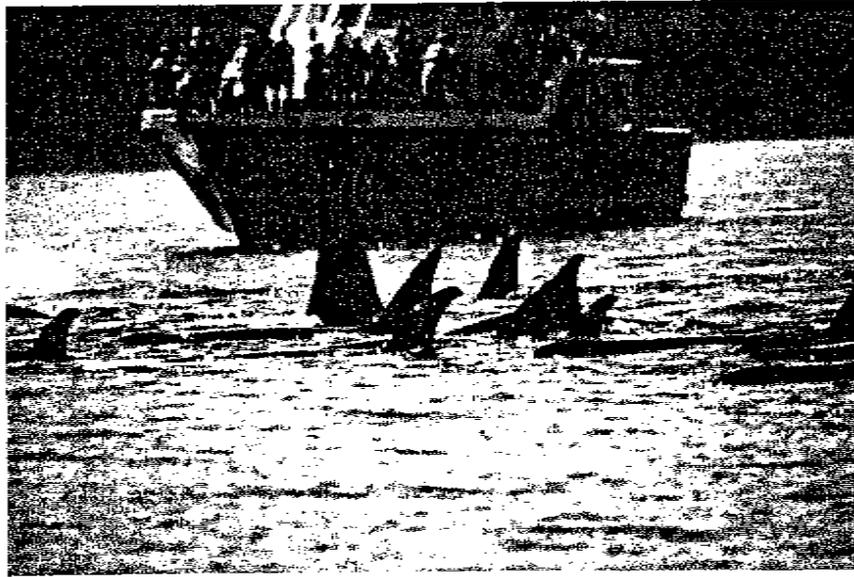
There are other, quite different, tourist possibilities. Social tourism is the name given to an economy in which public funds are dispersed in a way that distributes the benefits of tourism evenly across society. As it is usually practised, however, it is a kind of subsidized tourism for the "disadvantaged." It includes large institutions like the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, and Outward Bound, as well as many smaller urban groups who offer cheap nature outings for working-class urban dwellers. Trade unions and large industrial enterprises have often participated in these activities by providing vacation villages for workers. So have religious organizations such as the PTL Club. Vacation pay is also a form of social tourism. In Switzerland, state-sponsored holiday-savings plans are available that operate on a sliding scale according to the income of the subscriber.

In 1980 a United Nations conference on World Tourism in Manila affirmed that social tourism is necessary if millions of people are to enjoy "discovery, rest, and the beauty of the world."

Another development is adventure tourism and its recent offshoots ecotourism and biotourism. Standard offerings in this sector of the industry are river rafting, jungle safaris, trekking, and mountain-climbing. For wealthy tourists seeking more, there's skiing in Antarctica, dog-sledding in the Arctic, grizzly bear viewing in Alaska, and kayaking in Greenland or Baja California. An unquenchable appetite for the exotic and "uncharted" distinguishes much adventure travel. This description of one outfit's 1990 trip to Irian Jaya illustrates the point:

These jungles are the home of still uncontacted upper Asmat tribes living along the rivers and on the swamps in great treehouses, and we must travel with caution.... As the terrain, river conditions and tribal situations have many unknowns, we have allotted a good

A whale-watching expedition in the northern Pacific. By the mid-1980s, "eco-tourism" was big business.



chunk of time for this exploration. This is the leading edge of adventure and we must emphasize that you must be in extremely good physical condition and ready to accept unknown hardships en route.

The World Wildlife Fund defines ecotourism as travel to "protected natural areas, as a means of economic gain through natural resource preservation." The economic gain spoken of accrues to the host country. Governments in Costa Rica and Kenya, for example, have recognized that tourism to natural areas brings in more money than mining, forestry, or ranching would on those same lands. Some tour companies offer working vacations: harvesting crops in Third World nations, or assisting wildlife conservation work. These tour operators make a point of educating their clients about the effects of development on natural systems. Some also donate a portion of their fees to environmental groups in host countries.

Ecotourism raises questions about how a *socially* useful tourism would work. Surely it would be designed to meet local needs. At a minimum it would mean building a sustainable local economy and providing rewarding and well-paid jobs. It might also mean working the landscape in a way that invites care and participation; unpolluted swimming places for people to go to after work, for example. Lastly, it must strengthen cultural and political bonds within and between communities. Cultural exchanges and group vacations are ways of bringing people together.

An admittedly remote example of an alternative tourism is that promoted by the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in west-central Nepal. The Annapurna region is home to forty thousand subsistence farmers — and the annual host to twenty-five thousand foreign tourists who come to hike in the Himalayas. The area is in ecological crisis, part of a downward spiral of malnutrition, deforestation, erosion, fuel scarcity, overgrazing, and species extinction. ACAP has set itself the task of reconciling ecological restoration with sustainable community development and low-impact tourism. Based and directed in the villages, its programs include alternative energy generation, tree planting, literacy campaigns, trail repair, health centres, cultural festivals, and wildlife inventories. ACAP charges tourists a fee to enter the area and gives them a sophisticated brochure that discusses the connections between land and life in the region. Hot showers, diet, meal times, plastics, electrification, drinking water, price haggling, shitting, and begging: the brochure traces the connections between these tourist issues and both the Annapurna ecosystem and its cultures.

French social theorist Guy Debord has called tourism "a by-product of the circulation of commodities." The mass circulation of the middle classes around the globe is a phenomenon of vast proportions — now over 400 million people a year — overseen by an industry that has extended its management techniques out into the land itself. That world is a changed one, fragmented by development, diversified by marketing strategies, and overlaid with technologies like the car and the camera. As we'll see in the pages to come, the Annapurna project is just one example of another kind of circulation of people through the world, of a tourism directed in a way that encourages connections between community and region.