Such initiatives are undoubtedly one of the ways forward for tourism. The world, clearly, is not going to stop taking holidays—but equally clearly we can no longer afford to ignore the consequences. And if one of the major culprits has been the industrialization of travel, a genuinely postindustrial tourism, with the emphasis on people and places rather than product and profits, could turn out to be significantly more planet-friendly. ■

THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY

ON DESTROYING THE VILLAGE IN ORDER TO SAVE IT

GRAHAM BOYNTON

The use of traveling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are.
—Samuel Johnson

Exploring that fine distinction, evoked by Samuel Johnson more than 200 years ago, is still the essence of travel. In Dr. Johnson's day, travel as a romantic quest was accessible to only an elite few, whose exchanges with foreign cultures were infrequent enough to leave little impact upon them. Today, however, in the age of high-impact tourism, it is increasingly difficult to know what is real and what is not. If travel is primarily about discovery—and even in this era of mass tourism that is cited as the main reason Americans travel abroad—then the disappearance of things to discover creates a major problem for both the industry and its clients.

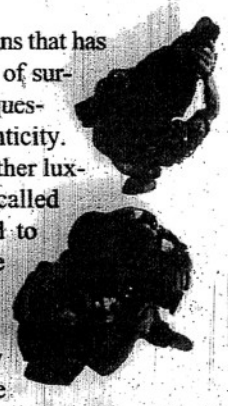
The travel industry has of late come to recognize this, and through the nineties has been developing a market segment that many see as the potential savior of diversity and authenticity on our planet, or at least what is left of it. Broadly defined as eco-tourism, this is based on the belief that threatened habitats and disappearing cultures will survive only if they are economically viable. Indeed, countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Kenya and South Africa have staked their reputations as tourist draws on the pristine quality of their preserved environments; thus, ironically, the tourism industry that is helping ruin the planet with one hand is with the other helping to save it.

In Africa, most notably, the past decade has seen sustainable eco-tourism projects mushrooming, and while a handful are showing great promise others are raising a whole new set of questions about what is and what isn't authentic. Earlier this year I spent a month in Africa studying eco-tourism programs in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and found success and failure in equal proportions. In Zimbabwe's remote northeastern bushveld, the Shangaan tribe has, under the aegis of Clive Stockil, a white farmer and conservationist, created a model sustainable utilization project. The tribe had been thrown off its traditional lands during the colonial era when the white government sectioned off parts of the country as national wildlife reserves for wealthy foreign tourists and declared all the animals "royal game," the property of the British crown. At the stroke of a pen people who had lived for centuries among the animals, and depended on them for survival, were transformed into poachers.

The Shangaans applied faultless logic to their predicament, arguing that if there were no animals there would be no tourists, and if there were no tourists then the government may as well give them their lands back. So they joined in a poaching campaign that, through the eighties, all but wiped out the elephant and rhino populations in the area. Only when Stockil arrived at the end of the decade with a proposal for a communal tourism project and a promise that they would once more benefit from the wild animals did they desist.

Now, ten years on, revenue from tourism and hunting safaris has helped build a school, attended by some forty children from the surrounding area, and two grinding mills, while construction has begun on a model village that will allow small groups of foreign visitors to live among the Shangaans. According to Stockil, the community "has the potential over the next five years to start generating $1 million annually."

Some 2,000 miles to the southwest of the Shangaans, another endangered African community is also relying on eco-tourism to halt its rapid trajectory toward extinction. The Bushmen—a term invented by white settlers and other tribes to describe the yellow-skinned clans of hunter-gatherers who had inhabited this southwestern corner of Africa long before the arrival of others—are down to a few tens of thousands, living in squalid communities around the Kalahari Desert, as far north as the Tsodilo Hills in Botswana and as far south as the Sederberg Mountains in South Africa's Western Cape. Once proud, independent, spiritual people whose knowledge and understanding of the natural world made them ideal tenants of this wilderness, they've been pushed to the fringes of modern society and reduced to stoned-out no-hopers.



Again, it is the intervention of white Africans that has given some Bushmen communities a chance of survival, but in doing so they have raised big questions about preservation and cultural authenticity. A benevolent Afrikaans farmer set up the rather luxurious resort in the Sederberg Mountains called Kagga Kamma, where tourists are invited to wander around the model Bushman village and watch as the occupants, dressed in animal skins, go about their centuries-old ways. The forty or so Kagga Kamma Bushmen actually live in tin or wattle-and-daub huts out of the

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tourists' view, and when they're off-duty they wear Mets baseball caps and Nikes and listen to rap music on boomboxes. But at the model village they represent as diligently and faithfully as possible the ways of their forefathers, and their reward over the past eight years has been a solid income from gate receipts and souvenir sales, and the acquisition of a parcel of land adjoining Kagga Kamma. Like the Shangaans, these Bushmen have taken up eco-tourism with gusto.

Critics—among them anthropologists, conservationists and foreign aid workers—accuse Kagga Kamma of Disneyfying the Bushman culture and have labeled the resort "the human zoo." They have a point. I watched several groups of middle-aged Americans pass through the village, and all the encounters were awkward and alienated: garbled exchanges that neither side understood, quick photographs for the slide show back in Idaho and then a quick bolt to the souvenir stall and a short bus ride back to the security of the air-conditioned lodge. The visits last less than an hour, not because the proprietors put a time limit on them but because the tourists had been there, done that and were ready to move on. Nobody gained anything from these exchanges.

My search for authentic Bushmen finally took me to the northern extremity of the Kalahari Desert, near the Tsodilo Hills, where Sir Laurens Van der Post had the encounter with the last wild Bushmen immortalized in his book *The Lost World of the Kalahari*. Like Sir Laurens and many others before me, I had hoped to make some contact with "the wild Bushman in all of us"—the free spirit that once resided in all men and that all men still hanker for; the way we were, uncomplicated, uncluttered, at peace. I'd been told that the Ju/wasi Bushmen in this desolate outpost were as close as I would get, and this turned out to be true. The very antithesis of the polished, organized, loincloth-wearing Bushmen of Kagga Kamma, the Ju/wasi were dressed in rags, were frequently blitzed on a killer brew of corn beer mixed with aircraft brake fluid and didn't give a damn about the tourists who occasionally camped at the rudimentary untended site across the way from their village. They, too, had been persuaded by white men that eco-tourism would save their culture, but they were too far gone to make anything of it. The moment the tourists paid them they would walk five miles to the shebeen at Tjumkwe and get blasted until the money ran out.

There is nothing heroic about self-destruction, but I could not help admiring the rebellious spirit of the Ju/wasi as they went about it. They were doomed, they knew it and they appeared to be going down giving the finger to the modern world. Any doubts I had about their authenticity were obliterated the day I went hunting with the village elder, a wiry man in his late 60s named Old Kaece. Armed with bow and poisoned arrows and a twelve-foot-long wooden pole that he trailed behind him, the old man moved through the thick bushveld with the grace of Nureyev in his prime. They say a true Bushman twangs with the bush, and watching Old Kaece sniffing and twitching and sensing everything around him, I understood what they mean. He knew every plant, every bird, every footprint; he knew why everything was there and how it all worked. It was as if he had become part of the natural world himself and was no longer inhabiting the same space he had been.

Old Kaece is one of a dwindling handful of Ju/wasi who still

BAYWATCH

INDUSTRIALISM IS ERODING THE WORLD'S BEACHES

Hoping to go for that tropical vacation, stretch out under the blazing sun, bronze a bit, enjoy the languid rhythms of the sea? Move fast—the beach you've dreamed of may soon be under water.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a U.N.-sponsored committee of 2,500 scientists who have been studying the effects of global warming, the Earth's surface temperature will be 3.5 degrees higher by 2100 than it was in 1990, leading to a projected sea-level rise of as much as nineteen inches. That could lead to inundation of huge portions of beachfront—not to mention the coconut palms—in the Maldives and Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands in the Pacific; and such Caribbean islands as Antigua and Barbuda.

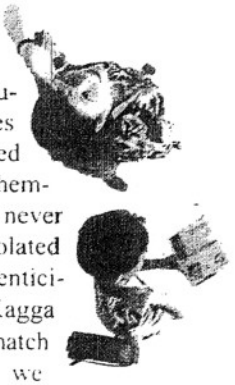
All these islands have aggressively marketed their tourism potential over the past decade with images of paradisiacal beaches and sunsets, which are for the most part their only marketable commodities. From the Caribbean to the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, island states have come to rely heavily on tourist dollars: Antigua receives 69 percent of its total G.N.P. from tourism, the Bahamas 53 percent. The Maldives gets 74 percent of its foreign-exchange earnings from tourism. The disappearance of their prime attraction would have a devastating impact on the economies of these and other island states, for whom the issue of atmospheric disturbance is not an abstract concern: Islanders have already been experiencing more violent and unpredictable weather patterns, which many scientists attribute to meteorological shifts induced by the growing ozone hole.

"If our beaches are eroded and violent storms destroy our hotels, we're certainly not going to have much to sell anymore to the tourists," says Neroni Slade, Samoa's U.N. Ambassador and chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition of forty-two states formed in 1990 that addresses global warming—a direct threat not only to the tourist trade and their economic survival but to their physical survival as well. When the final round of negotiations over a global agreement on greenhouse-gas emissions commences in Kyoto, Japan, this December, AOSIS (representing entities as diverse as Jamaica, Cyprus and Micronesia) will be demanding, at minimum, that the industrial countries not backtrack from their commitment to hold emissions to 1990 levels, as called for in the current global accord.

Place your reservations now. Without prime beaches, in the next millennium you may be limited to snowy mountain peaks. Unfortunately, Greenpeace recently warned that as global temperatures increase, glaciers are already starting to melt. Bon voyage. MARK SCHAPIRO

possess the hunting and tracking skills that were once essential to the Bushmen's survival in these arid outposts. Now, what with foreign N.G.O.s providing food aid and tourists paying cash, a trip to the Tjumkwe supermarket is understandably preferable to a long day's hunt under the summer sun, and Old Kaece's sons and grandsons have no need to learn the old ways. Unless, of course, it is to entertain eco-tourists who, according to the white advisers, would travel across the world to go hunting with a real Bushman. But the young Ju wasi aren't interested in turning their village into another Kagga Kamma, so when Old Kaece dies his rare knowledge and skills will go with him.

Will eco-tourism save the Bushmen? Probably not. No doubt aspects of Bushman culture will remain on show at places like Kagga Kamma, and whatever high-minded outsiders have to say about authenticity, they will improve the lives of previously beleaguered communities. But, sadly, the last of the real Bushmen, the Ju wasi, are unlikely to survive in any coherent form. Those who don't self-destruct will drift away to the towns and cities in the south, find jobs, intermarry and disappear into the new multicultural Africa.



When Dr. Johnson's peers were exploring the planet, they were looking upon a world that had yet to be engulfed by the human tide. They encountered foreign cultures and traditions that informed them, challenged them and helped them better understand themselves. Alas, that moment is gone and it will never be regained. What we are left with are isolated pockets of resurrected and preserved authenticity—in places like eastern Zimbabwe and Kagga Kamma—where, with a little luck, we may snatch glimpses of the way things were before we arrived.

In the end, while wandering the African bush in search of the Bushmen's legacy, I was left with the odd and poignant realization that those who dress up and look like Bushmen are most likely hustling for the tourists, and those who shun tourists, and look most like us, are the authentic, real thing—a fact that etches a quivering and blurry line in that meeting place of Dr. Johnson's between imagination and reality. ■

A GUIDE TO PAPERLESS TRAVEL

OR, BORDER-CROSSING FOR THE UNINITIATED

EARL SHORRIS

In my village of Ixtlan everyone, even those yet unborn, is an immigrant. —*Primitivo Rodriguez, Mexican political consultant*

Much of the business- or work-related travel north of Mexico into the United States is done without the bureaucratic complications of passports, visas, residence cards and so on. People who use this form of travel are known as "illegals," but only to those who are unaware that the U.S. Constitution grants legal status to all persons, even those without papers. Nonetheless, the undocumented traveler will have a more enjoyable and profitable sojourn if he or she is fully prepared, from start to finish, beginning with the cost.

The free spirit who chooses to go north without a tour guide is rare these days, given the rigors of crossing the border. Anyone planning a trip should expect to spend about 1,500 U.S. dollars for a tour, plus the cost of second-class bus travel from the interior of Mexico to the crossing point. For the price of this one-way trip, the guide will deliver the traveler to a point north of the last Border Patrol checkpoint or to an airport in Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston or Dallas Fort Worth.

Choosing a tour guide, known as a *pollero* or chicken handler, is of utmost importance. The best tour guides depend on repeat business and word-of-mouth advertising. If possible, one should speak to satisfied customers or relatives of satisfied customers who are now working and living in the United States. It is almost always a mistake to wait until one arrives at the border to choose a tour guide. More than a few of the guides who wait at bus stations in border towns hoping to find clients are inexperienced or unscrupulous.

The high cost of an experienced guide compares to first-class one-way air fare, and it should be considered as such. Although there is some risk to the traveler because all fees are nonrefundable, the wise traveler will keep in mind the purpose of the trip: The cost can be amortized in a relatively brief period, given the differential between below-minimum-wage work in Mexico and in the United States. A *jornalero* (day laborer) who earns about $2 a day on a farm in Chiapas can sometimes net that much in an hour in the United States picking strawberries in the insect-free ambiance of a cloud of pesticides or merrily washing dishes in the sub-basement of a restaurant in Manhattan's Chinatown; some paperless travelers may even be able to do piecework in the comfort and security of the room in which they live. In the latter instance they can work right alongside their children late into the night, protecting the little ones from the endemic national corruption of television and rock and roll. These business arrangements are strictly at the option of the traveler; guides rarely perform extra service as employment counselors.

Once the guide has been selected, it is wise to prepare for the method of travel. Crawling through a drainpipe and crossing the Rio Grande near Brownsville call for entirely different attire. Women and girls coming north have special needs: condoms,

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