

# Tourism and Travel during the Cold War

Negotiating Tourist Experiences  
across the Iron Curtain

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## **Introduction**

Crossing the Iron Curtain: an introduction

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# Crossing the Iron Curtain

## An introduction

*Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Christian Noack*

Tourism – travel in pursuit of pleasure – is an essential ingredient of modernity. In the twentieth century, tourism was democratised and transformed into a mass phenomenon. The right to rest, leisure, and annual paid holidays was a feature of both the 1936 Soviet Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The three competing societal systems of the twentieth century – capitalism, communism, and fascism – sought to engage their citizens in leisure travel.<sup>1</sup> When the post-Stalinist Soviet Union joined the global contest to provide its citizens with “the good life,” tourism became a Cold War battleground.<sup>2</sup> On either side of the East–West divide, tourism proved “too important to leave to the private sector alone.”<sup>3</sup>

Focusing on Western tourism behind the Iron Curtain, this volume sheds light on how the post-war European tourist industry challenged and overcame the ideological fault lines and enabled ever-increasing mobility across the Iron Curtain. We analyse the politics and economics of Western tourism in Eastern Europe. Tourism mattered to the socialist bloc’s balance of payments and substantiated official claims to “peaceful coexistence,” while in the 1970s it was a target of high-level diplomacy during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process, with several provisions of the Helsinki Final Act dedicated to the question of mobility across the Iron Curtain. We also go beyond an analysis of policies and institutions to explore how individual holidaymakers from various Western countries experienced and made sense of their journeys behind the Iron Curtain. Thus we investigate first, how and why Eastern Europe became a tourist destination for citizens of the West; second what impact this had on the development of a tourism industry in the Eastern bloc; and third to what extent the experiences of Western tourists in Eastern Europe influenced mutual perceptions and Cold War stereotypes of “the other.” In so doing, we engage with three major trends and debates in recent historiography: the histories of transnational tourism, the cultural Cold War, and mobilities in the supposedly backward and static societies in Eastern Europe.

The history of tourism has travelled far in the past two decades. It was not long ago that scholars working on the history of travel and tourism habitually lamented their topic’s exclusion from the “charmed circle of acceptable themes in European history.”<sup>4</sup> Tourism was considered a trivial topic and “the enduring stereotypes of

tourists as herdlike, superficial gazers doggedly seeking amusement . . . hampered serious scholarly investigation.<sup>5</sup> Today, however, tourism history is flourishing. The questions of tourism, travel, and mobility are firmly established at the heart of contemporary debate about consumption, migration, globalisation, and climate change. “To study tourism is to study the history of the modern world,” as Eric Zuelow recently put it, echoing Dean MacCannell’s classic study, *The Tourist*.<sup>6</sup>

Tourism, in the broadly shared Western understanding of the term as leisurely travel, is by definition a modern phenomenon, as it presupposes the genuinely modern concept of leisure time. With industrialisation and the rise of the middle classes, tourism spread across social boundaries and geographical borders. MacCannell’s take on modern tourism, ironically modelled after the pre-modern practice of religious pilgrimage, emphasised tourism’s role in the spatial and cultural authentication of modern nations and states by visiting “shrines” – landscapes and sights framed as being enduringly significant for a national community.<sup>7</sup> In nineteenth-century Central and Eastern Europe ruled by the German, Habsburg, and Russian empires, the nation-building process coincided with the spread of tourism. As routes, landscapes, and sights were marked or relabelled as national, tourism helped carve out spatial identities, and after 1918 was firmly ingrained in the state-building process.<sup>8</sup>

In comparison, the Soviet state was a late bloomer. While denouncing the allegedly idle emptiness of bourgeois tourist practice, the regime strove to juxtapose an alternative model of purposeful tourism within the boundless Soviet territory. With “proletarian tourists” as trailblazers for forging a new Soviet people, the Soviet Union’s external borders served at the same time as spatial markers of the new transnational Soviet community.<sup>9</sup> This reinvention of tourism posed a number of dilemmas for the Soviet leadership as it accentuated the conflict between the purposeful and the pleasurable, austerity and consumption, collective goals and individual desires.<sup>10</sup>

The Sovietisation of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans between roughly 1948 and 1956 meant that the idiosyncratic Soviet model of tourism spread to those countries, and with it the inherent dilemmas. How these dilemmas were accentuated as the East European countries, each with its own pre-socialist tourism history, organised their own state-sponsored tourism sectors, was thus contingent on the continuities and breaks with national tradition.<sup>11</sup>

Tourism is by default entangled in competing nationalising and internationalising forces. The authorities were frequently tempted to close their borders for fear of dangerous diseases and the ideas that foreigners might bring. With rallying cries such as “See America first!,” “Know your country!” (Sweden), and “Discover your homeland!” (Czechoslovakia), travel promoters around the world sought to democratise and promote domestic tourism by kindling a national consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the drive to experience the exotic abroad has always compelled travellers to cross geographic and territorial borders. The growing interest in tourism history, closely related to the wider turn to transnational and global history, has confirmed the advantages of looking beyond the nation obvious to historians wary of methodological nationalism.<sup>13</sup> In a time infatuated with

connectivity, tourism presents an ideal prism through which to view ideas, people, and commodities as they circulate and move across borders.<sup>14</sup>

Cold War studies have witnessed a similar transformation in the wake of the cultural turn. The history of entanglements, transfers, and transnational connections have broadened a field traditionally preoccupied with international relations conducted by a powerful elite. The Cold War was rooted in ideological antagonism, geographical division, and nuclear deterrence. The latter resulted in a stalemate, especially on the European continent, which made the “cultural front” all the more important as a Cold War battleground. The response, naturally enough, was to study the Cold War competition for hearts and minds around the world.<sup>15</sup> Historians now embrace a plurality of themes and methods in their work, and operate with a pragmatically broad understanding of the field, investigating everything “from alliance diplomacy and political manipulation to development projects, from cultural and intellectual confrontations all the way to bloody ‘proxy wars’ in allegedly ‘peripheral’ areas.”<sup>16</sup>

More than anything else, the study of cultural competition from 1945 to 1989 has taught us that the Cold War was awash with connections and exchanges across the East–West divide.<sup>17</sup> Rather than an impenetrable Iron Curtain, the Eastern bloc erected a “semipermeable membrane,” which permitted select goods, people, and information to pass through.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the barriers that each East European state erected were permeable in ways that often changed several times in the period. Innocuous goods could usually pass in both directions, and the ease with which Westerners could cross the Iron Curtain generally increased over the years. East European citizens were allowed to travel to the West as tourists, too, although in much smaller numbers. Early in the Cold War this was a luxury granted to only the most trusted cadres, and while the Soviet Union upheld this principle until the end, travel policy in other countries followed a circuitous pattern of liberalisation and restriction.<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the 1960s, for instance, a growing number of ordinary Czechoslovaks went on holiday in the West, but this ended when the Normalisation regime tightened the screw again in 1969.<sup>20</sup> The 1970s and 1980s also saw East Europeans emigrate in greater numbers to the West, which added another dimension to the external barriers or membrane.<sup>21</sup> The Iron Curtain was thus perforated with loopholes. It was as much a mental as a physical barrier, and, being constituted by a multitude of actors and actions, was emphatically dynamic.<sup>22</sup>

The democratisation of international tourism in the West during the post-war boom coincided with the post-Stalinist opening of Eastern Europe to the outside world. After a hiatus of about a decade following Sovietisation in 1948, a steadily increasing number of ordinary tourists from North America and Western Europe started to visit the Soviet Union and the other countries behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>23</sup> Western interest in visiting Eastern Europe gave the socialist regimes an opportunity to showcase their societies, and to earn hard currency while doing so. However, Western tourists also presented the risk of espionage, and could be a negative influence on local populations by exposing them to foreign fashions and ideas. In other words, tourism in the Cold War was a field of competing cultural, economic, ideological, and security concerns.

The efforts to attract foreign tourists raised a number of fundamental questions that had significant ideological ramifications. Which attractions should be promoted to Western visitors? Bourgeois pre-socialist destinations such as Bohemia's spas, or the accomplishments of state socialism? How were visitors to reach those destinations and be guided, fed, and accommodated? The various answers to these questions point to the fluctuations in the regimes' self-confidence and the unstable balance between economic and security interests, liberalisation, and periods of intensified social control. Controlling Western tourists, however, became increasingly difficult with the admission of individual travellers with private means of transport.

International visitors competed with domestic travellers for the same, often scarce tourism resources. As recent research on East European mobility have shown, mobility, and private motor tourism in particular, was far more common in the Eastern bloc than conventional wisdom has it.<sup>24</sup> Studies have also focused on voluntary and involuntary migration, finding that both social and spatial mobility was greater than previously assumed.<sup>25</sup> To examine tourism behind the Iron Curtain thus means engaging with important domestic developments in infrastructure, as the socialist states, too, "established frameworks and incentives that people on the move elaborated and constituted in their own ways, often leading to unintended consequences."<sup>26</sup> And all the while the socialist tourism administrations struggled to keep the two groups apart.<sup>27</sup>

### **Cold War tourism or tourism in the Cold War?**

Cold War Europe offered a plurality of real and imagined borders for the tourist to cross. Immediately after the war even the real territorial borders were often imaginary, and long stretches of the border between East and West were poorly demarcated. Tourists and soldiers on leave occasionally strayed into enemy territory by mistake, leading to diplomatic debacles and accusations of espionage.<sup>28</sup> The Iron Curtain that Churchill spoke of in 1946 was not a physical border, but an abstract, ideological divider. As the Cold War progressed, however, the physical East–West border was increasingly fortified with barbed wire, roadblocks, and watchtowers.

The ideological conflict gave Westerners' travel in Eastern Europe an exotic flavour, akin to the kind of holidays in sites of suffering, disaster, and death usually described as dark tourism.<sup>29</sup> Some Western companies made a point of offering tours with a Cold War flavour, for instance to Yugoslavia, "the country next to the Iron Curtain."<sup>30</sup> Western guidebooks to Eastern Europe, and especially to Berlin, the frontline of Cold War Europe, reflected the changing intensity of the conflict and its potential for dark tourism. Fielding's 1951 edition of *Travel Guide to Europe* called Berlin "a keg of dynamite and definitely *not* recommended under any circumstances."<sup>31</sup> A Swedish guidebook from 1973 anticipated its readers' Cold War–induced fears by asking "Is it dangerous to travel to Berlin?" although it answered calmly in the negative.<sup>32</sup> In 1988, Fodor's guide to Eastern Europe comforted the reader that "travel to Eastern Europe is by no means the uncertain, complex affair it once was, and all the Eastern bloc countries are extremely eager to attract Western visitors."<sup>33</sup>

The Cold War and communism could indeed serve as attractions in their own right, as the contributions to this volume by Michelle Standley and Shaul Kelner illustrate. Standley's study of bus tours to East Berlin in the 1970s points to the desire of West German tourists to have their impression of a backward East Germany confirmed. Kelner's analysis shows that many American tourists pictured themselves as Cold War undercover agents when they visited Soviet Jews in the 1970s and 1980s. In both cases, Cold War mentalities clearly coloured the tourist experience of East Berlin and Moscow. The mingling of leisure culture and international politics is reminiscent of Americans' "Cold War holidays" in France studied by Christopher Endy.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to stress, though, that the Cold War was by no means the only lens through which tourists viewed this part of Europe under communist rule. There is an important distinction to be made between Cold War tourism and tourism in the Cold War. While the Cold War was at the centre of the first form of tourism, it was a contextual chronological marker in the second.<sup>35</sup> In some parts of Eastern Europe, the pre-socialist tourist legacy survived the advent of a socialist regime. For example, the spas of Bohemia and Budapest had long been established destinations for health tourists from all over Europe, and they continued to attract some Western guests after the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> Having survived the war comparatively unscathed, socialist Czechoslovakia and Hungary also appealed to a cultured middle class who wanted to see the spectacular architecture of Central Europe.<sup>37</sup> To consider Western tourism in Eastern Europe solely in terms of Cold War conflict and capitalist–socialist competition is to risk overlooking the tourist traditions that the regimes were sometimes happy to perpetuate. Moreover, as the chapters by Elitza Stanoeva, Adelina Stefan, and Igor Tchoukarine show, the South East European tourist authorities worked hard to overcome the barriers to Western tourism raised by the Cold War.

The distinction between Cold War tourism and tourism in the Cold War raises the question of how the key processes and caesuras of Cold War history and tourism history mapped onto one another. The contributions to this volume point to clear links between the periodisation of Cold War historiography and tourism history. The post-Stalinist Soviet Union's attempt to shed its international isolation is the backdrop to Karl Kleve's chapter on the rapidly expanding post-war network of bilateral civil aviation agreements, including between the Scandinavian countries and the USSR. The initiative in 1957 to invite children and youth groups from capitalist countries to spend the summer at the Soviet Artek camp, studied by Kathleen Beger, was part of Nikita Khrushchev's ideas for peaceful cooperation and mutual understanding. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia after the Stalin–Tito split pursued its own plans for opening up to the West, as Igor Tchoukarine shows in his chapter on the country's engagement with the global travel industry in the early Cold War.

Yugoslavia's success with international tourism inspired the tourism sectors in Bulgaria and Romania, studied here by Elitza Stanoeva and Adelina Stefan. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) first discussed tourism at a summit in 1955, and in 1957 held a conference devoted to tourism. Initially, the

focus was international tourism within the socialist bloc, but as the chapters by Stanoeva, Stefan, and Standley show, from the 1960s onwards, the socialist countries increasingly sought to develop international tourism across the East–West divide. The objective of the nascent South East European tourist industry was to extract hard currency from sun-and-sea holidaymakers, even though the more relaxed international relations at the time also meant that adventurous individuals could explore Eastern Europe. However, as Lonneke Geerlings shows in her chapter on Rosey E. Pool’s 1965 Trans-Siberian railway journey, going off the beaten track did not necessarily result in a more profound exchange of ideas or experiences than on a Black Sea beach. The linguistic gulf between the Slavic and the Germanic world proved too great even for a polyglot like Pool. For the most committed fellow travellers, such as the Swedish tourists in Albania studied by Francesco Zavatti, an encounter with the realities of their Stalinist utopia often resulted in mutual misunderstandings and a cognitive dissonance that proved difficult to gloss over.

The contributions to this volume thus point to a clear relation between the history of tourism behind the Iron Curtain and the political history of the Cold War in Europe. Key political events such as the Soviet-led invasions of Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979 had an immediate impact on Western tourism in Eastern Europe. In each case, the response to the military campaigns included political pressure to cancel travel, which temporarily reduced the tourist flow from the West. Within a year or two, though, things were usually back to normal.

Tourism behind the Iron Curtain also followed – and became mixed up with – the positive course of European detente and cooperation from the mid-1960s to the end of the Cold War. As a symbol of improved international relations, official tourist organisations around the world declared 1967 the International Tourist Year. In Eastern Europe the occasion was celebrated with a considerable easing of visa regulations. In subsequent years, as Angela Romano shows, tourism was a feature of the CSCE process and the Helsinki Final Act, while human rights activists, encouraged by the pledges made by the signatories to the accords, joined the growing traffic across the Iron Curtain, adding a new dimension to East–West tourism studied here by Shaul Kelner.

The relation between tourism and human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and stressed in the Helsinki Final Act raises the question of the role of tourism in the 1989–1991 caesura. The socialist regimes’ promise to deliver a better life than in the West generated a rising demand for consumption that the regimes were never able to satisfy. Unflattering comparisons between East and West prompted by tourist encounters increased the strain on the socialist regimes, but domestic and intra-bloc tourism was in fact one of the appreciated pleasures in socialism.<sup>38</sup> To be sure, the complexity of tourism as a “product” laid bare the contradictions and flaws of the socialist system and its economy.<sup>39</sup> But the official sponsorship of tourism and mobility as integral to the socialist project facilitated individual and even subversive appropriations by the population, and thus allowed for “socialist escapes,” which may in the long run have had a stabilising effect on socialist societies.<sup>40</sup>



As solidarity between the East European regimes began to falter in 1989, however, tourism did play a part in the ultimate fall of communism. When Hungary relaxed its border controls with Austria in the summer of 1989, East German holidaymakers poured in and stayed on in the hope of escaping to the West. Faced with a humanitarian crisis, Hungary eventually allowed the East Germans free passage to Austria, which forced Czechoslovakia to close its border with Hungary. Thousands of East German “tourists” then besieged the West German embassy in Prague, and they too eventually won passage to the West. The socialist attempt to satisfy citizens’ wanderlust by having relatively open borders inside the Eastern bloc thus ultimately accelerated the bloc’s disintegration.<sup>41</sup>

The fall of communism resulted in the wholesale re-evaluation of education and work, and former tourism workers were often at an advantage in the new economy.<sup>42</sup> Two chapters in this volume address this Cold War legacy: Kathleen Beger’s and Adelina Stefan’s oral history interviews with former summer camp pioneers and tourism workers, which show how experience of the tourism sector proved valuable in the new market economy. Interaction with Westerners had given them better language skills, connections in the West, and perhaps even a more entrepreneurial mindset that helped them launch their own businesses and ultimately to navigate post-communism.

The chronologies of the Cold War and of international tourism cannot be understood without also taking the long-term socioeconomic developments into account. The introduction of statutory paid leave in the interwar period and the switch to a five-day working week in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, changed the patterns and concepts of consumption and leisure. In terms of technological development, the spread of private car ownership in the same period and the first wide-body planes were important milestones. All of this happened independently of the Cold War, yet posed particular challenges to the socialist regimes and planned economies of Eastern Europe as they tried to satisfy their citizens’ growing demands for consumption and recreation.

In order to question the relationship between Cold War tourism and tourism in the Cold War, we must also reconsider the realities of state security and central planning. The security services on either side of the Iron Curtain harboured serious concerns about the liberalisation of mobility between the blocs. As Karl Kleve shows here, commercial air routes between East and West were met with scepticism because they made spying easier. The socialist security apparatuses also feared that tourism would make it harder to catch Western infiltrators and easier for citizens to escape. If nothing else, greater contact with capitalist lifestyles would give the lie to socialist promises of conscious consumption and purposeful leisure habits.<sup>43</sup> In an attempt to curb the negative effects, vigilance campaigns regularly cautioned the public against interaction with Western tourists, as they might be spies in disguise – in fact, a justified fear as spies from both sides did of course pose as tourists.<sup>44</sup> The important point, though, is that despite the power and influence wielded by the security apparatuses in Eastern Europe, and despite the fears they harboured about Western tourism, the political and economic gains from Western tourism largely overrode their security concerns. The history of



tourism in the Cold War was thus one of enduring tension between competing institutional interests inside the socialist leadership and bureaucracy.

The opening up for Western tourists must be understood against this backdrop. As Alex Hazanov reminds us, the opening up of the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s was by no means “a careful experimental process,” but rather “a series of ad hoc decisions that together amounted to a profound historical shift.”<sup>45</sup> Although more research is still needed on this process in other East European countries, there is little evidence to suggest that the process was any different there. Western tourism required the involvement of a multitude of different organisations, with conflicting interests resulting in improvised and often-revised policies.<sup>46</sup>

Historiography has made tremendous progress since the publication in 1991 of Derek Hall’s seminal volume *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*.<sup>47</sup> At that point, the authors were forced to draw on personal observation to supplement problematic official statistics and tendentious publications.<sup>48</sup> Since then, the opening of the government archives – East and West – has provided historians with a far more nuanced understanding of the regimes. The contributors to this volume can thus rely on solid archival evidence when studying the evolution of the tourism sector and its economic and political significance at home and abroad.

Tourism historians generally find that institutional developments and the textual and visual representations of destinations are better documented in the archives than the experiences of individual tourists. Here, however, historians of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe are at an advantage, because of the excruciating detail in which the regimes monitored and policed the sentiments of their citizens and visiting foreigners. True, secret police files are often unreliable and must be used with great care. Yet when triangulated with oral history interviews and other sources, they provide unique insights into foreign visitors’ experiences and their encounters with locals. In addition to the official sources, the contributors to this volume draw on diaries, letters, memoirs, travel accounts, and contemporary news reports held in private and institutional archives. The various combinations of sources and methods employed by the contributors together provide a complex and nuanced picture of tourism and travel behind the Iron Curtain.

### **Outline of the book**

Recent studies have pointed to the abundance of capitalist thinking to be found in the socialist economic systems.<sup>49</sup> The first section of the book focuses on the development of a socialist tourism industry, with contributions by Stanoeva and Stefan that show the commercial concerns that drove the South East European tourism industry. Influenced by neighbouring Yugoslavia and Greece, Bulgaria and Romania took foreign tourism seriously as a motor of economic development. Earlier than the other countries in the socialist bloc, for which they would be models, Bulgaria and Romania specifically addressed a Western European clientele in the new market for package holidays.

Every socialist country had at least one agency that dealt specifically with foreign tourists. In most cases it was the responsibility of the state tourist agencies such as the USSR's Intourist, Bulgaria's Balkantourist, and Romania's ONT Carpați. The primary objective of these institutions was to earn hard currency, and they all opted for collaboration with commercial tour operators in the West in their bid for a share of the leisure market.<sup>50</sup> Their ability to offer package tours to foreigners generally depended on a plethora of other organisations, from the trade unions' domestic tourism infrastructure to transportation networks to the catering industry. In most cases, this prevented the emergence of full-blown tourist industries with ministerial backing, capable of channelling the necessary resources into the development of domestic and international tourism. One exception to this rule, as Elitza Stanoeva shows, was Bulgaria, which had comparatively little heavy industry, so the tourist sector had less competition in the institutional hierarchy.

The presence of Western tourists was fraught with unintended consequences – as Stefan shows, it enabled smuggling networks and black markets – yet “the lure of capitalism” still prevailed over the negative effects. The single-party states found it difficult to suppress encounters and exchanges between Western tourists and citizens involved in the service infrastructure. Personal encounters between travellers and hosts were often accompanied by the exchange of personal services for cash or commodities, which was officially forbidden but almost impossible to prevent. This led to tacit acquiescence and attempts by governments to cream off the profits in the shape of foreign currency shops and the like.

Michelle Standley's chapter, by contrast, deals with East German efforts to use mass tourism to “market” socialism with the help of guided bus tours to East Berlin. Not that this was without its attempts to earn hard currency with the help of the *Zwangsumtausch*, the compulsory exchange of Western D-Marks for much less valuable Ostmarks, but the main aim was to impress the day trippers with the achievements of state socialism in the divided city. However, Standley analyses how the official East German tourist agency, Reisebüro-DDR, largely failed to make a dent in the convictions of its customers. Day trippers either completely ignored all attempts to mediate the “socialist experience,” preferring to aggressively reiterate Western stereotypes and narratives, or engaged very selectively with the tour guides' narratives. The East German attempts to anticipate and tweak the tourists' perceptions failed miserably.

Perception management posed less of a problem in the case of the package tours to Bulgaria and Romania, where Western commercial companies partnered with Eastern agencies to promote what were essentially cheap sun-and-sand holidays on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Package tours were ostensibly non-political, and the idea of the “Gold Coast” as a beach holiday paradise did not necessarily corroborate the Cold War narrative of the drab life under communism.

The tensions between possible exposure to propaganda and the individual pursuit of tourist experiences are central to the second section of the book. Kathleen Beger's chapter on the famous soviet holiday camp for Young Pioneers, Artek, illustrates the negotiations between visitors and hosts as to the meaning of Soviet

internationalism. Artek celebrated a very specific amalgam of national cultures in a Soviet-style social straitjacket that nevertheless left room for individual agency. The need for mediation and translation between East and West produced a new type of international (youth) tourism specialist, who was sometimes capable of building a career on the experiences gathered in Artek, as Beger's interviews show.

Drawing on ego-documents, Lonneke Geerling's analysis of a visit by two experienced women activists and travellers to the Soviet Union in the 1960s exposes both the possible gains and limits of such sources for tourism history. As left-leaning feminists, Rosey E. Pool and Ursel Isenburg at first glance fit the category of fellow travellers, and they were indeed partisan, their account surprisingly uncritical of their private and public encounters on the trip. At the same time, Pool's contemporary notes are as sketchy as they are startling, providing us with an image of Khrushchev's USSR that owed little to other travelogues of the time. It requires familiarity with the protagonists' lives and personal circumstances to interpret them, as they are a very specific, subjective take and commentary on Western political issues, such as women's liberation or racism in the American South.

Zavatti's chapter likewise problematises fellow travellers. Drawing on press material, friendship society archives, and a curiously multivocal travel account, he shows that Swedish friends of Albania framed their holidays there not exclusively in political terms, but were as much enchanted by the sun, sea, and sand – and possibly sex. As Zavatti shows, travelling through Hoxa's Albania, Swedish tourists did not completely forfeit their agency, although it would seem that their room for manoeuvre was narrower than in the contemporary Soviet Union.

The tourist experience is central also to Shaul Kelner's chapter. Exploring a unique body of written reports produced by American tourists in Brezhnev's Soviet Union in the 1970s, Kelner introduces us to the opposite of a fellow traveller. His human rights travellers were on self-appointed subversive missions behind the Iron Curtain. In this case, the Cold War was not just a temporal framework, but their very *raison d'être*. Cold War clichés about spying and communist repression determined what they assumed they would find and what they hoped to achieve. In the Soviet Union, their expectations were confirmed by the warm welcome that awaited them in the vulnerable privacy of the dissidents' flats, as opposed to the cold official hospitality of Intourist's making.

The chapters in the final section of the book return to the larger question of the economic and political roles which tourism was expected to play in the second half of the twentieth century. Set in the context of the Marshall Plan's support for tourism, Igor Tchoukarine's chapter documents how widespread was the hope that international tourism would trigger political change and economic recovery after the Second World War. In the course of de-Stalinisation, the optimistic view of tourism harboured by Yugoslavia and the new tourism-promoting organisations such as the International Union of Official Tourist Organisations and the European Travel Commission spilled over to the rest of socialist Eastern Europe.<sup>51</sup> Khrushchev was one of the most optimistic if erratic proponents of a "tourist turn"

in Soviet policies.<sup>52</sup> Karl Kleve, though, in his account of the framework agreements for international airlines to use Soviet airspace, confirms that the Soviets could muster considerable resistance to opening up “hard” Cold War borders. Air travel in northern Europe, Kleve asserts, was directly affected by Khrushchev’s Thaw, but concessions were always a quid pro quo for putting the Soviet carrier Aeroflot on a par with the flag carrier Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS). Where the Soviet Union was unlikely to profit from opening its airspace, as in the question of overflight rights over Siberia for routes to the Far East, such concessions were very slow to materialise.

Did Cold War travel behind the Iron Curtain, then, confirm or frustrate the planners and politicians’ hopes that were paradigmatic of the post-war period? Any answer will have to be as inconclusive as the debate over whether East–West encounters facilitated or slowed the collapse of communism. In economic terms, smaller and less developed socialist bloc economies such as Bulgaria profited most from investment in the tourism sector. In most socialist countries, though, tourism remained marginal, and subordinate to other, often ideologically motivated preferences. At the same time, tourism, at least the domestic kind, rose to prominence as part of the consumer turn in state socialism following Stalin’s death. With all the necessary differentiation between the Eastern bloc countries, tourism as a very specific economic product never sat easily with the hierarchical and bureaucratic procedures of central planning. On the one hand, this prevented a rise of service industries to prominence in the socialist countries. On the other hand, it required ideological compromises to let it work in practice.<sup>53</sup>

In political terms, tourism behind the Iron Curtain sparked skirmishes in the cultural Cold War. It carried the weight of expectation of both sides, as was evident in the CSCE negotiations of the tourism, visa, and currency regulations in the run-up to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. The closing chapter by Angela Romano illustrates the optimism of Western politicians about the potential for change that such contacts might mean, epitomised in Egon Bahr’s famous rationale for German Ostpolitik, “Wandel durch Annäherung.” Eastern bloc leaders happily paid lip service to mutual understanding through increased mobility, but their insistence on control and securitisation repeatedly betrayed their insecurities about tourism’s functioning behind the Iron Curtain.

Then again, tourism was too important to simply curtail, in particular at times of detente. The obvious contradictions that international tourists encountered just added to the long list of real-socialist oddities that people in the Eastern bloc had learned to live with, and created openings for the subversive appropriation of such encounters by the tourists themselves.

## Notes

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  - 3 Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, “Introduction,” in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.
  - 4 John K. Walton, “Taking the History of Tourism Seriously,” *European History Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1997): 563.
  - 5 Baranowski and Furlough, “Introduction,” 1–2.
  - 6 Eric G. E. Zuelow, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Journal of Tourism History* 10, no. 2 (2018): 103; Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013 [1976]).
  - 7 *Ibid.*
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  - 14 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 9; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn, 2009).
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  - 18 Michael David-Fox, “The Iron Curtain as Semipermeable Membrane: Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex,” in *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s*, ed. Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 18.
  - 19 Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–19.
  - 20 Paulina Bren, “Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall . . . Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis) Contents,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 4 (2008).
  - 21 Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), 250–70.
  - 22 Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4–6.
  - 23 As the methodologies used varied by country and period, historical tourists figures are notoriously difficult to compare. Under communism, tourist figures often drove institutional competition for resources, which further reduce their reliability. With these caveats in mind, though, rough figures for the rapid increase in tourists in the early Cold War are, for the USSR: in 1956 some 500,000 foreign visitors, rising to 1.3 million in 1965, 3.7 million in 1975, and 5 million in 1980. A. D. Popov, “‘Uvidet. Poniat. Polubit’: Sovetskii inostrannyi turizm v kontekste publichnoi diplomatii perioda kholodnoi voiny,” *Modern History of Russia* 7, no. 4 (2017): 150. See also Denise Cambau, “Travel by Westerners to Eastern Europe,” *ITA Bulletin* 40 (1976).
  - 24 They have been partly inspired what came to be called the “new mobilities paradigm,” which suggest a cross-fertilization between the historical sub-disciplines of transport history, migration history, and mobilities studies in general. Colin G. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1–20. See also “Connecting Historical Studies of Transport, Mobility and Migration,” *Journal of Transport History* 38, no. 2 (2017). Luminita Gatejel, “Driving Behind the Iron Curtain: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc,” *Mobility in History* 7, no. 1 (2016); *Warten, hoffen und endlich fahren: Auto und Sozialismus in der Sowjetunion, in Rumänien und der DDR (1956–1989/91)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2014); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Christian Noack, “Brezhnev’s ‘Little Freedoms’: Tourism, Individuality, and Mobility in the Late Soviet Period,” in *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, ed. Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).
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- 27 Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 92–98.
- 28 See, for example, the week 35 report from the US Embassy, Prague, to the Department of State, Washington, 30 October 1959, 749.00(w)/10–3059. Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs: Czechoslovakia 1955–59. Archives Unbound, Gale CENGAGE Learning.
- 29 Note though that the concept of dark tourism remains a problematic term for several reasons as pointed out by Tony Seaton, "Encountering Engineered and Orchestrated Remembrance: A Situational Model of Dark Tourism and Its History," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*, ed. Philip R. Stone et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
- 30 Sune Bechmann Pedersen, "A Paradise Behind the Curtain: Selling Eastern Escapes to Scandinavians," in *Eden für Jeden? Touristische Sehnsuchtsorte in Mittel- und Osteuropa von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Bianca Hoenig and Hannah Wadle (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019), 245.
- 31 Temple Fielding, *Fielding's Travel Guide to Europe* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1951), 359.
- 32 Gert Hammerby, *Turen går till Berlin* (Stockholm: Geber, 1973), 3.
- 33 Richard Moore, ed., *Fodor's 89 Eastern Europe* (New York: Fodor's Travel Publications, 1988), 11.
- 34 Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
- 35 For a discussion of the Cold War as an analytical concept and a chronological marker, see Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, "Introduction," in *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 36 David Clay Large, *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History of Intrigue, Politics, Art, and Healing* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).
- 37 Bechmann Pedersen, "Paradise Behind the Curtain."
- 38 David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, "Introduction: The Socialist 1960s in Global Perspective," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Mark Keck-Szajbel, "The Borders of Friendship: Transnational Travel and Tourism in the East Bloc, 1972–1989" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013).
- 39 On the complexity of tourism as a product, see Christoph Hennig, *Reiselust: Touristen, Tourismus und Urlaubskultur* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1997), 159–64.
- 40 Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum, and Alexander Vari, eds., *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).
- 41 Baranowski and Furlough, "Introduction," 20; Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 311–24.
- 42 Ghodsee, *Red Riviera*, 101–3.
- 43 Michelle Standley, "The Cold War, Mass Tourism and the Drive to Meet World Standards at East Berlin's T.V. Tower Information Center," in *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*, ed. Eric G.E. Zuelow



- (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 221–22; Dragoș Petrescu, “Closely Watched Tourism: The Securitate as Warden of Transnational Encounters, 1967–9,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 2 (2015).
- 44 Sune Bechmann Pedersen, “Eastbound Tourism in the Cold War: The History of the Swedish Communist Travel Agency Folkturist,” *Journal of Tourism History* 10, no. 2 (2018).
- 45 Alex Hazanov, “Porous Empire: Foreign Visitors and the Post-Stalin Soviet State” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016), 4.
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- 47 Derek R. Hall, ed., *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Belhaven Press, 1991).
- 48 For earlier examples of studies seeking to account for the development of tourism in Cold War Eastern Europe, see *Osttourismus – Chance der Begegnung: Urlaubsreisen nach Osteuropa*. Conference, 23–25 October 1978, Loccumer Protokolle 18/1978; Martin A. Garay, *Le Tourisme dans les démocraties populaires européennes*, vols. 3609–3610, Notes et études documentaires (Paris: La documentation française, 1969).
- 49 Katalin Miklóssy and Melanie Ilić, eds., *Competition in Socialist Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community: Soviet-Bloc Controversies over East–West Trade* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014).
- 50 Bechmann Pedersen, “Eastbound Tourism”; Shawn Salmon, “Marketing Socialism: Intourist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s,” in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Andrei Kozovoi, “The Way to a Man’s Heart: How the Soviet Travel Agency ‘Sputnik’ Struggled to Feed Western Tourists,” *Journal of Tourism History* 6, no. 1 (2014); Duncan Light, “‘A Medium of Revolutionary Propaganda’: The State and Tourism Policy in the Romanian People’s Republic, 1947–1965,” *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 2 (2013); Shawn Connelly Salmon, “To the Land of the Future: A History of Intourist and Travel to the Soviet Union, 1929–1991” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2008).
- 51 Frank Schipper, Igor Tchoukarine, and Sune Bechmann Pedersen, *The History of the European Travel Commission, 1948–2018* (Brussels: The European Travel Commission, 2018).
- 52 On Khrushchev’s excitement about the potential of tourism to promote peace and friendship, see Johanna Conterio, “‘Our Black Sea Coast’: The Sovietization of the Black Sea Littoral under Khrushchev and the Problem of Overdevelopment,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 19, no. 2 (2018): 327–29.
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