



Reclaiming Travel

Ilan Stavans, Joshua Ellison

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Based on a controversial opinion piece originally published in the *New York Times*, *Reclaiming Travel* is a provocative meditation on the meaning of travel from ancient times to the twenty-first century. Ilan Stavans and Joshua Ellison seek to understand why we travel and what has come to be missing from our contemporary understanding of travel. Engaging with canonical and contemporary texts, they explore the differences between travel and tourism, the relationship between travel and memory, the genre of travel writing, and the power of mapmaking. Stavans and Ellison call for a rethinking of the art of travel, which they define as a transformative quest that gives us deeper access to ourselves.

Tourism, Stavans and Ellison argue, is inauthentic, choreographed, sterile, shallow, and rooted in colonialism. They critique theme parks and kitsch tourism, such as the shantytown hotels in South Africa where guests stay in shacks made of corrugated metal and cardboard yet have plenty of food, water and space. Tourists, they assert, are merely content with escapism, thrill seeking, or obsessively snapping photographs. Resisting simple moralizing, the authors also remind us that people don't divide neatly into crude categories like travelers and tourists. They provoke us to reflect on the opportunities and perils in our own habits.

In this powerful manifesto, Stavans and Ellison argue that travel should be an art through which our restlessness finds expression—a search for meaning not only in our own lives but also in the lives of others. It is not about the destination; rather, travel is about loss, disorientation, and discovering our place in the universe.

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