Introduction

Touristic Illusions and Realities

> Africa. There's nowhere like it on the planet for wildlife, wild lands and rich traditions that endure. Prepare to fall in love.
>
> —Lonely Planet *Africa* travel guide, 2017

> I've been able to explore new countries throughout the African continent—from the deserts of Morocco to the pyramids of Egypt, from the Giraffe Manor in Kenya to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and Zambia, and especially the bush of South Africa. There's an adventure waiting for you on the continent of Africa!
>
> —Kiersten "Kiki" Rich, a.k.a. "The Blonde Abroad," (https://theblondeabroad.com), 2020

HAVE YOU ever dreamed of visiting Africa as a tourist, as the Lonely Planet and "The Blonde Abroad" are encouraging you to do? If so, you are not alone. In the assortment of African-themed classes that I teach, virtually every one of my students expresses that sentiment. I reply to these aspirations encouragingly, but also inquire what, in particular, is prompting their interest. Most often, my students and other would-be tourists respond that they'd like to venture out on safari or to experience some aspect of the "exoticness" (even if they don't always use that word) that has long been associated with the continent. Indeed, Africa's dramatic wildlife and distinctive cultures—constitutive elements of this perceived exoticness—have for centuries stimulated people's imaginations worldwide.

Beyond a genuine desire to journey to Africa to view these "attractions," very few of these aspiring tourists ever critically engage with the prospect, in great part owing to their lack of knowledge of the continent and its peoples. Even many of the countless tourists who *have* traveled to the continent fail to acknowledge or even realize that skilled African personnel

employed in the tourist industry repeatedly manufacture "authentic" experiences in order to fulfill foreigners' often delusional, or at least uninformed, expectations. These carefully nurtured and controlled performances reinforce tourists' reductive impressions—formed over centuries—of the continent, its peoples, and even its wildlife. In turn, once back in their respective homelands, tourists' accounts of their travels often substantiate, and thereby reinforce, prevailing stereotypes of "exotic" Africa. Meanwhile, Africans' staged performances for their "guests" affect the lives of these "hosts," not only by generating remunerative opportunities, but also by subjecting the continent's residents to objectification, exoticization, and myriad forms of exploitation.

If you've already been turned off to the idea of traveling to Africa as a tourist, please don't be; that's not the objective of this book. Rather, this text strives to explore the enduring allure of Africa in the modern history of tourism and the dynamics of the contrasting, and often mutually invisible, touristic experiences on the continent by foreign audiences and local participants in the industry, from the nineteenth century until the present day. In so doing, through the prism of tourism the book connects African residents with the global community, and vice versa. The book also considers Western notions of Africa as an escape from the stressful, technology-laden modern world and argues that these enchanting notions reflect broader (mis)understandings of the continent. In examining these external perceptions of Africa, the book demonstrates that tourism to the continent reinforces these impressions, as well as contends that Westerners' general images of the continent often diverge from their notions of touristic Africa. Even so, many foreigners have no trouble reconciling their prevailing impressions of Africa as mired in intractable political, martial, and epidemiological crises with their romanticized, touristic notions of the continent. Over the ensuing chapters, the book explores this seeming incongruence. Finally, the book aims to deepen understandings of the durable, often mythic, appeal of Africa as a tourist destination. It also explores the range of impacts that tourism has had upon the continent and its peoples as well as upon those who make this journey.[1]

A General History of Tourism

It is, of course, impossible to pinpoint the first tourist in the history of the world. For what it's worth, the word "tourist" first appeared in print in approximately 1800.[2] But there surely exists precedent activity that could

reasonably be characterized as tourism, especially if we employ historian Rudy Koshar's description of it as "any practice arising from an individual's voluntary movement between relatively permanent 'settledness' and an extended moment of leisured displacement."[3] For example, centuries prior to the advent of the word "tourism" at the dawn of the nineteenth century, an array of ancient Egyptian monuments were already inspiring sightseers, including, reputedly, such household names from Greek history as Homer, Plato, and Orpheus; wealthy Romans similarly descended upon these destinations. As historian Lionel Casson has compellingly declared, "The massive temples and tomb complexes associated with both the Old (third millennium BCE) and the New (roughly 1550 BCE to 1077 BCE) Kingdoms were as amazing to inhabitants of the ancient world as they are to us today."[4] So, was ancient Egypt, as arguably Africa's most famous civilization, the first tourist destination? Maybe, but probably not. As is often the case, our comprehension of the Western and Classical worlds greatly outpaces our understandings of other areas of the planet. Furthermore, if we keep Koshar's definition of tourism in mind, the first tourists could have set forth from virtually anywhere in the world where individuals could afford to engage in forms of leisure travel—hardly a limiting criterion.

Even if we're unable to identify the original tourists, we can still, with reasonable certainty, locate one of the preliminary forms of modern tourism in the travels of English aristocrats to various stops on the European continent, including France, Italy, and, at times, Switzerland, beginning at the end of the seventeenth century. Known as the "Grand Tour," this endeavor required considerable time and resources, thereby lending it an exclusivity to social classes of sufficient means. Even the primary objective of those who undertook these journeys—that is, to become finer, less parochial gentlemen—would be foreign to most of our contemporary motivations to engage in touristic activity. Scholarly interest in this type of travel is understandable, given that these tourists were among the few individuals engaged in travel for pleasure and there remains ample source material to reconstruct their journeys. Yet it also reflects a historical focus on the wealthy and powerful and a fascination with the development of particular, durable tourist destinations in the Western world. Regardless of the intended outcomes of travel during this period, it was also replete with challenges, including severely limited tourist infrastructure, namely, roads and inns; lurking bandits; and a menagerie of currencies and languages to negotiate. Thus, the notion of "traveling for pleasure" in this historical

context was somewhat misleading, and many people only ventured out if they were compelled to do so.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, tourism had become more widespread for a variety of reasons, collectively ushering in the "golden age of travel." One factor was the expansion of the middle class in England and elsewhere, which placed tourism within financial reach for a growing, albeit still relatively small, number of individuals. Another was the power of the steam engine, which both reduced costs and expanded the distances tourists could traverse within reasonably short amounts of time. As author and publisher Alexis Gregory has declared regarding this profound impact, "Steam powered the newfangled trains. . . . Steam drove the pistons deep in the iron hulls of the largest ships the world had ever seen—and then poured through the turbines of even larger ships. It warmed radiators in vast new palace hotels where tropical palms could flourish even when ice caked the windows . . . and it drove the generators that lit up the glistening chandeliers of palaces and casinos."[5]

Although traveling for pleasure largely remained an endeavor for the leisured classes, the pioneering travel agent Thomas Cook introduced in 1841 what we might think of as modern mass tourism by organizing the first conducted tour in Europe. Some years later, in 1869, Cook arranged the first tours of the Holy Land and Egypt, often appended to the more traditional European "Grand Tour." The mythic appeal of the ancient world was considerable. As historian Eric Leed explains regarding a traveler's awed account of a tour of Greece in the nineteenth century, "It was not the sight of Athens that triggered the universal shivering, the touristic orgasm, but its mere actuality. Here, as elsewhere, the origin of the power of place is clearly in the imagination of the traveler, stocked with a literature and world of images."[6] By this time, the term "tourism" was widely understood as travel for pleasure, the evolving impressions of it reflecting its ever-increasing accessibility.

With the growth of middle classes in the Global North and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere, tourism was marked by further democratization. Technological developments expanded the geography of favored destinations while maintaining the total amount of time individuals were removed from their respective places of employment. By the Second World War, some one million people were traveling abroad each year. The introduction of the automobile and, more significantly from a global perspective, commercial air transport further facilitated mass tourism and left virtually nowhere on the

earth's surface unreachable by curious travelers. Even space, the so-called final frontier, will shortly be the destination of the newest waves of tourists.

Over time, what tourism meant to its practitioners also changed, though many aspects and objectives of the experience remain remarkably similar. If travel originally entailed considerable hardships, tourism is now marketed as pleasurable, or at least as a means to pleasure. Perhaps nowhere is that more evident than on safari in Africa, which largely entails no-risk, carefully managed exposure to the continent's most dangerous species embedded in an otherwise relaxing, often luxurious experience for clients. Yet there also exist a number of individuals who willingly engage in adventure tourism around the world, replete with challenges as they test their endurance, resilience, and fortitude while engaged in activities such as mountaineering, trekking, or rock climbing, far removed from home. Tourism has always held appeal as a means of discovery, self-realization, self-consciousness, and, to a certain extent, escape. As the famous novelist and filmmaker Michael Crichton has explained, "Often I go to some distant region of the world to be reminded of who I really am. There is no mystery about why this should be so. Stripped of your ordinary surroundings, your friends, your daily routines . . . you are forced into direct experience. Such experience inevitably makes you aware of who it is that is having the experience. That is not always comfortable, but it is always invigorating."[7] This type of approach to tourism forces participants to recognize both the significant sameness and difference between oneself and the alien culture(s) into which they venture. Certainly, tourists and their hosts throughout time have both been engaged in this form of self-reflection.

Irrespective of the shifting landscape of global tourism, for some time, studying and writing about the history of tourism was an activity in which few scholars engaged, and even fewer considered the impact of tourism on host societies. But you are currently reading this very sentence because scholarly attitudes toward tourism history around the world have changed. Anthropologists and social historians have led this charge, interested not in the tourism of "men of great stature and wealth and ladies of frivolity and breeding," as Alexis Gregory characterized the early European tourists, but in the otherwise ordinary experiences of those travelers with lesser means. Scholars have also increasingly focused on the significance of tourism for both guests and their hosts and, in particular, on the social, economic, environmental, and political impacts of tourism in high-volume travel destinations.[8]

Unfortunately, Africans who labored in the tourism industry in the continent's past remain largely invisible. When scholars first began considering tourism in Africa, the focus was almost exclusively on the potential for the sector to serve as a vehicle for economic and human development. Africans, both within and beyond the industry, were thereby lost in a sea of financial indicators, projections, and forecasts. Even social historians, who have reconstructed the lives of a remarkable range of Africans, have granted these individuals scant attention. These significant gaps in our understanding of Africans' lived experiences in the industry are periodically reflected in this text, especially in the initial chapters. In turn, this lack of scholarly inquiry and resultant knowledge reminds us that even heightened touristic developments and activity over the centuries have done little to inform or help alter external impressions of much of Africa and its peoples.

The Enduring Appeal of Africa as a Tourist Destination

There exist myriad, varied motivations to engage in tourism, but many of them associated with visiting Africa are rather unique owing to the continent's distinctive history. Indeed, Africa has durably held considerable tourist appeal for countless outsiders. But why? One way to respond would be to attribute the continent's appeal in the Western imagination to a potent mixture of ignorance, racialism, and fantasy, dating back centuries. Following contact with populations on Africa's northern and eastern coasts, Asians and Europeans began to speculate about the human and animal populations resident in the interior of the continent. The prevailing external perception of this vast space characterized it as "spectacular, but savage, beauty, populated by exotic tribesmen" and large animals.[9] In short, every aspect of the continent—from its physical features to its peoples and fauna—was exoticized, defined by everything that Europe was *not*.

Over time, the emergence of racism as a component of the broader justification of the commerce in African slaves did nothing to temper external notions of "exotic Africa." Rather, this inhumane trade deepened these perceptions by emphasizing African savagery, barbarity, and heathenness, manifested, for example, in recurring accusations of African cannibalism. But even divergent representations of the continent as a place of serenity and innocence similarly heightened the appeal of Africa. In the eighteenth century, for example, traveler Michel Adanson, a French botanist and naturalist, wrote alluringly about the continent: "Whichever way so ever I turned my eyes, I behold a perfect image of pure nature: an agreeable

solitude bounded on every side by a charming landscape." These and other accounts of the continent suggested that Africa was "the last great wilderness, and to those who listened, steeped in this romanticism, these narratives created an Africa that was both paradise and wilderness."[10]

European explorers of the continent during the nineteenth century played an important role in the next chapter of African tourism, not by establishing fundamental tourist infrastructure or even laying the groundwork for it but by representing the continent in a way that continued to pique the curiosity of outsiders. Probably no individual was more central or instrumental in this process than Henry Morton Stanley. The accounts of Africa that this deeply troubled, yet internationally famous, soldier-cum-journalist-cum-explorer generated throughout the second half of the nineteenth century amounted to nothing short of the truth for the countless readers who consumed them. Without access to Stanley's published accounts, however, Africans were unable to refute his dubious claims. Moreover, Stanley required any white travel companions to promise contractually not to write or speak publicly about their experiences until after he had published his journals. In this manner, Stanley "reduced any direct challenge to his position as the expert and guaranteed his narrative's place as the standard interpretation."[11]

Shortly after Stanley and others "discovered" Africa, European armies invaded the continent and subjugated its indigenous residents. During the ensuing period of colonial overrule, which lasted from the latter decades of the nineteenth century until roughly the 1960s, European scholars, settlers, and administrators deepened already-durable impressions of African distinctiveness, casting the continent's residents as primitive, "grown children" who embraced backward traditions and cultures. These mischaracterizations, in turn, justified the "white man's burden" to civilize these alleged brutes and legitimized the array of European colonial empires in Africa (and elsewhere). Even when representations of the continent were well-meaning, intended to broaden the appeal of Africa by highlighting its myriad agreeable features, they reinforced the supposed simplicity and primitiveness of the continent. Take, for example, an account by Martin and Osa Johnson, an American couple who traveled extensively around the continent in the 1920s and 1930s and became famous for their films, books, and photographs describing life in northern Kenya at their "Lake Paradise" home: "There are no frills to our regime. We dress to keep warm and eat to live. Simple pleasures stand out in their true values unsullied by the myriad artificial entertainments of civilization. Our diet is plain;

our costume unadorned; we rise with the sun and labor while it lasts. As a result, we find life more savory than it ever was amid the conveniences of hot hotels and traffic-jammed streets."[12]

Following the conclusion of the colonial era, Africa remained no less exotic to the external observer, nor did outsiders' imaginations of the continent grow any less fanciful, despite the expanded knowledge of Africa and its peoples that grew with the passage of time. This heightened comprehension continues to coexist with durable misunderstandings of the continent infused with the same myths, stereotypes, and misperceptions that colored earlier impressions of Africa. Popular literature, which had for centuries contributed to, or even engendered, these misperceptions, continued to play a role, as did films and, eventually, television. Indeed, television has significantly shaped perceptions of "wild Africa." Beginning in the 1970s, wildlife documentaries began appearing on public television programs such as *Nature* and, into the 1980s, *Nova*, and this pattern endures. Yet, while images of the continent's fabled fauna abound, scenes of Africans' everyday lives never seem to appear on the National Geographic or Discovery channels. Ironically, most Africans never encounter these celebrated animals, as most people live in urban areas or in places where the human population is too dense for most or all of these fauna. Rather, these animals reside mainly in expansive game reserves or parks, or on the shrinking fringes of human habitation. Yet popular culture and media sources consistently depict an undifferentiated Africa teeming with big game, a land insulated from technology and the industrialized, frenetic pace of the Global North. As conservationists Jonathan Adams and Thomas McShane have written, "We cling to our faith in Africa as a glorious Eden for wildlife. The sights and sounds we instinctively associate with wild Africa—lions, zebra, giraffe, rhinos, and especially elephants—fit into the dream of a refuge from the technological age. We are unwilling to let that dream slip away. . . . The march of civilization has tamed or destroyed the wilderness of North America and Europe, but the emotional need for wild places, for vast open spaces like the plains of Africa, persists."[13]

Into the twenty-first century, these apparent attributes—simplicity, exoticness, vastness, pristineness, timelessness—continue to collectively summon outsiders who remain curious about the continent. Naturally, this romanticized primitiveness and perceived isolation hold considerable appeal for individuals with the means to extract themselves, if only temporarily, from their hectic home environments and relocate to a place that is seemingly untouched by the disagreeable aspects of modernity.

The tourist industry, which plays an important role in perpetuating and deepening tourists' desire to travel to the continent, both encourages and facilitates these journeys. In particular, an array of savvy international tour operators and agencies, rather than tourism officials in the African countries of destination, oversee these processes. The result is often a "distorted image of wild, darkest Africa, a land of deserted beaches, tom-toms, lions, witch doctors, and bare breasts. This caricature is designed to give the illusion of adventure—but one that is carefully prepared, always controlled, and experienced with the assurance of undisturbed comfort."[14] Echoing these assertions, historian Curtis Keim astutely reminds us that "tourist Africa isn't the real Africa, just like tourist America isn't the real America. It is carefully managed, commercialized, and exoticized."[15]

One of the more recent manifestations of the "tourist Africa" to which Keim refers is the cultural tourism industry, though it too features strong links to many of the continent's long-standing allures. In this touristic endeavor, foreigners reductively objectify the African peoples and places they visit, learning about them in ways that highlight difference—the more divergent, the more appealing. For example, in order to reconcile these cultural tourism experiences with their reductive, preconceived notions of Africa, or as art historian Carol Magee calls them, "recognizable spectacles and performances," tourists typically expect to witness Africans drumming or dancing in "traditional" garb. These seemingly timeless ritualistic performances would be otherwise rare in local societies, but cultural tourists are not interested in encountering the trappings of modernity, such as cellular phones or televisions, while engaged in this form of entertainment.[16] Meanwhile, the African performers of these sessions are more than happy to oblige the touristic desire for the primitive, becoming fully complicit in the ongoing exoticization of the continent and its peoples as they pursue livelihoods in this growing sector.

Visit Africa, before the Tourists Arrive: The History of Tourism to Africa

As outlined above, it appears that Egypt may have been the first consistent African travel destination for foreigners. The Greek philosophers who reputedly visited Egypt went, as Eric Leed writes, to "drink at the fount of its wisdom."[17] In fact, many of the intellectuals in the ancient world believed that "all arts, order, government, and civilized practices originated in Egypt and spread from there throughout the Mediterranean."[18] Going forward, Egypt remained symbolically important in the European psyche,

as it constituted a significant piece of the perceived foundation of Western civilization and was thereby exalted, even as European armies laid waste to its local defenders.

The next wave of foreigners attracted to the various flora, fauna, and peoples of Africa were not so much tourists as they were travelers and explorers. Household names, such as David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley, for example, were among those individuals who undertook significant travels to and within the continent, aided by countless indigenous porters and other auxiliaries. The sensational and often hyperbolic accounts of their travails further whetted the public's appetite for Africa. These representations of the continent and its inhabitants helped reinforce already durable images of exotic Africa and subsequently shaped the impressions of generations of outsiders.

In the nineteenth century, missionaries and, following the onset of formal colonialism in the last decades of the century, colonial administrators, big-game hunters, and anthropologists replaced explorers as the most numerous foreigners to visit the continent, stay for extended periods, and record their observations and experiences. Again, it would be misleading to depict these individuals as tourists, as their primary functions were otherwise, but just like their predecessors, they powerfully shaped popular imaginations of the continent and piqued further touristic interest in its peoples and wildlife. These updated accounts appeared on the eve of the commencement of routinized tourism to Africa, which followed the colonial subjugation of the continent and was facilitated by the establishment of transportation networks and tourist infrastructure. Although these initial touristic developments were primarily intended to service European settlers, the security provided by the array of imperial states and the expanding infrastructure rendered Africa newly opened for foreign tourism.

The continent's wildlife attracted most of these early visitors. At first, these foreigners arrived to hunt it; only later would subsequent waves of tourists arrive to shoot the fauna with cameras instead of guns. Over time, safaris transformed primarily from hunting expeditions to photography forays and, with the advent of inexpensive charter flights from many points of origin in Europe and elsewhere, this hitherto cost-prohibitive endeavor became much more accessible to aspiring tourists. Following the Second World War, colonial regimes and state-sponsored airlines promoted the African territories as viable tourist destinations, featuring the three *s*'s: sun, sand, and sea. Generating revenue from their colonial territories dovetailed

nicely with the imperial powers' propagandistic aims of showcasing the ostensibly positive changes they had engineered in these settings. Meanwhile, although Africans occupied the most menial positions in these tourism industries, reliable employment and wages, coupled with less demanding and dangerous work environs, encouraged some local residents to improve their socioeconomic status via service in this sector.

Following the conclusion of the colonial era, newly independent African states attempted to capitalize on the three *s*'s to generate badly needed revenue for their largely bare coffers. Political independence arrived at a time when economic experts were widely touting tourism as a means to develop "third world" countries, and these incipient African states seemingly constituted the perfect laboratories in which to test these speculations. In response, cash-strapped African governments raced to expand whatever tourist infrastructure they had inherited from their former colonial masters, though many nations were forced to construct it virtually from scratch. Many African administrations wagered that investments in tourism would pay handsomely, even though these initial outlays were extremely risky. In practice, however, the political turmoil that engulfed many African states following independence tempered or, in some cases, entirely precluded any revenue from tourism. Oftentimes, even if violence was far removed from a particular tourist destination, would-be visitors perceived Africa monolithically, thereby discouraging travel to any part of the continent. In turn, states' gambles were proved to have been ill-advised, as they were now stuck with empty airports and vacant hotels for which they had allocated considerable amounts of their scarce funds. By the end of the 1980s, Africa was attracting only roughly 2.5 percent of all global tourist arrivals and receipts. And even then, most of this activity was centered in Northern Africa, namely in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria—the southern fringes of Europe's so-called pleasure periphery.

More recently, increased political stability and strategic public-private partnerships have enhanced Africa's appeal as a tourist destination. The expansion of the middle class in an array of developing countries has also expanded the number of potential tourists to the continent. Moreover, the motivations to visit Africa, which now also include sex tourism, "voluntourism," and ecotourism, have dramatically diversified, even if many of the underlying impetuses outlined above remain firmly entrenched. African governments, communities, and individuals are all striving to benefit from this diversification and the overall expansion of the industry, while

also attempting to reduce financial risks, minimize exploitation, and maintain a sense of dignity in a market that can render this objective extremely difficult. Africans' insistence on more responsible approaches to tourism, coupled with an expanding global appetite to experience the continent, has made the industry more assistive in broader development objectives on the continent than ever before, though substantial challenges remain.

Is Tourism Beneficial for Africa—Are You Helping by Visiting as a Tourist?

Even if the tourism industry is playing a larger role in human development in Africa than it ever has, considerable debate persists regarding whether it is beneficial for the continent's residents. Just like seemingly everything else in life, tourism has its proponents and its detractors. Think no further than where you reside: wherever that may be, there undoubtedly exist residents who want to expand local tourism and others who bemoan or even vilify it. Within any community, region, state, or nation, individuals will argue on both sides of this debate. Africa is no different, though over time its residents have certainly sharpened their viewpoints regarding tourism.

The Good?

First, the good. Or, the alleged good, anyway, that tourism offers Africa. Motivated by tourism revenues that were being generated in developing regions—first in the Caribbean in the 1950s and then, from the 1960s and 1970s onward, in the Pacific, parts of Asia, and Latin America—African states sought to utilize tourism as an engine for economic development. Reflective of this optimism, the World Bank and World Tourism Organization encouraged the expansion of tourism sectors in nonindustrialized countries as a means of economic growth that would produce both national and local enrichment. Even academics—many of whom are now skeptical of the industry—were initially generally supportive of this strategic approach.

Tourism also generates employment opportunities and can thereby raise household and national income levels. Even sectors of the economy that don't directly rely on tourism for their survival—for example, taxis and other forms of private transport, as well as places of entertainment—can be positively affected, generating revenues and employment opportunities owing to the influxes of tourists.[19] The industry is also generally perceived to be environmentally "clean," further underscored by the various types of ecotourism growing in popularity throughout the continent.

Finally, in many places in Africa, tourism contributes to wildlife conservation. Many of the species that tourists are particularly interested in viewing are afforded significant protections, as these faunas constitute financial assets to their host nations. For example, one study conducted in the late 1980s estimated that, in Kenya, a lion's value was approximately $7,000 per year, while the annual value for an elephant herd was roughly $610,000.[20] These figures have steadily risen over the decades that have ensued.

The Bad?

Tourism also negatively affects Africa. Perhaps most troubling from an economic perspective is the volatility of the industry, which is dependent on the whims of individuals, most of whom reside in the Global North. This relationship is at its most problematic when developing nations become overdependent on tourism, whose clientele is largely out of their control. In practice, the appeal of various tourist destinations in Africa can wax and wane, and without the development of other sectors of national economies, states are highly vulnerable to vicissitudes in the tourist market. Moreover, portions of tourism revenues and attendant local economic benefits may be lost to foreign companies that control the touristic infrastructure—known as "leakage" within the industry—as is the case with many of the hotels and other accommodations that visitors to Africa utilize. Even the generation of employment opportunities can be misleading, as overall numbers may be modest or, more importantly, the jobs extremely low paying or seasonal. Further, these positions are inherently located around particular tourist sites, thereby deepening regional employment discrepancies. These and other economic issues have prompted one observer to cynically note that "tourism is usually selected by governing elites in developing nations as much for political prestige as economic viability" and job creation.[21]

Tourism can also have deleterious environmental impacts, especially in highly visited areas, including in national parks and reserves. Pollution, overuse of limited water supplies, and damage to fragile ecosystems are just three examples from a much longer list. Anyone who has gone on safari in Africa's expansive spaces knows that the automobile traffic at certain sites can be, ironically, overwhelming.

Tourism on the continent can also erode Africans' dignity and rehabilitate colonial-era relationships between "white overlords" and "black subjects." Indeed, when heritage and traditions become commodities, a community's culture is essentially placed on sale for touristic consumption,

which some scholars refer to as "symbolic colonialism." Other observers have, perhaps even more harshly, characterized this process in Africa as the "Disneyfication" of local culture. In this same vein, consider the damning statements of Tanzanian scholar I. G. Shivji regarding the fledgling tourist industry in his country in the early 1970s:

> Tourism—with its "flunkeyism" of opening and closing cab doors, with the extremely humiliating subservient "memsahib" and "sir" attitudes and, above all, the unavoidable dampening of vigilance and militancy that accompanies the necessity to create a hospitable climate for tourists—is a major component of "cultural imperialism." . . . One has only to go to some of our palatial beach hotels (only the outside of which a Tanzanian fisherman will ever see) and watch the waiters and waitresses in their immaculate uniforms, moving up and down the corridors like disciplined school children and churning out "Sirs" and "Memsahibs," to understand what an outrageous, alien structure we are harboring.[22]

So, Good or Bad?

So, then, which is it: good or bad? Well, most objective observers would agree that the tourism industry in Africa has produced mixed results. The economic benefits have been uneven—from region to region, country to country, and even within individual countries—the social impacts (negative and positive) hard to measure, and the environmental impacts, although very real, often overstated. The polemical contentions embedded in the divergent interpretations of tourism in Africa are summarized well in the following passages by scholars Garth Allen and Frank Brennan as part of their general assessment of the industry:

> Commentaries on tourism, on its developmental potential, on its casual exploitation of local peoples, on its negative effect and on its destructive impact on the environment, have often been marked by a predetermined, even supercilious hostility. The literature on tourism, at its worst, amounts to little more than a cluttered landscape of vapid moralizing and unconvincing theory, focusing on the demerits of developing tourism, rarely on the demerits of not doing so. The literature is characterized

> by a series of anguished reflections on tourism's advance, with endless miseries, and where the course of things is profoundly troubled.[23]

Given this type of partisanship, it's no wonder that tourism in Africa continues to pique emotions from a range of stakeholders, often featuring competing agendas and motivations, and will undoubtedly continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Book Content and Chapter Outline

The treatment of Africa's touristic history in this book unfolds in a series of loosely chronological chapters, intended to highlight the significance of various forms of tourism for a variety of African communities across the modern historical period. Examples from settings throughout the continent feature across the chapters to illustrate the specific touristic trends and themes that the book examines.

Chapter 1 examines the initial ventures by European explorer-tourists to the continent throughout the nineteenth century, as well as the birth of the industry in Egypt around the middle of the century. European scientific societies and governments commissioned adventurers such as Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke to amass information about Africa's flora, fauna, peoples, and geography. To these ends, these travelers required large African entourages, primarily composed of porters, but also of guides, diplomatic agents, and hunters, as they traversed footpaths across the interior of the continent that were well known to their indigenous companions. Europeans who survived these journeys typically returned home to enjoy varying degrees of celebrity and often sought to capitalize on their newfound prestige by publishing memoirs that calculatedly sensationalized their African experiences; their commercial enterprise renders these short-term visitors "professional tourists." Meanwhile, the birth of the industry in Egypt placed Africa firmly on the touristic map. Intrepid men and women traveled up and down the Nile on trips organized by the pioneering travel agent Thomas Cook and facilitated by countless locals, who both formally and informally served as the backbone for the fledgling industry. Both explorers and visitors to Egypt returned to Europe with strong, often pejorative, impressions of Africa and its peoples, while their rac(ial)ist gaze and limited understandings of what and whom they had encountered also generated legion misperceptions and further exoticized the continent. Over

time, these adventurous visitors prompted myriad imitators, and their respective governments made claims on the lands over which they had traveled as European nations carved up the continent in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, thereby granting this initial form of tourism a contributory role in the ensuing military invasion of Africa.

Chapter 2 considers the history of hunting expeditions in East and Southern Africa, regions that featured the most big game, beginning in the nineteenth century and extending until the conclusion of the colonial period. Among the best known of these hunter-naturalists were Frederick Selous (whose experiences in Southern Africa inspired H. Rider Haggard's fictional character Allan Quatermain), Cornwallis Harris, and Gordon Cumming. These sportsmen periodically featured in newspaper headlines, and many penned popular volumes detailing their exploits. Yet none of their undertakings would have been possible without assistance from the large numbers of African scouts, guides, guards, cooks, and porters upon whom they relied to facilitate their hunting excursions. In 1909–10, ex-US president Theodore Roosevelt joined the ranks of these hunter-luminaries via his Smithsonian-Roosevelt African expedition. Big-game hunting continued throughout the colonial period, but in a much more controlled manner, prompted by the depletion of game owing to hunting excesses. As cameras began to replace rifles on safari, colonial officials steadily set aside vast animal habitats as reserves or parks to provide sanctuary for this increasingly lucrative fauna and otherwise restricted sport hunting in a variety of ways.

Chapter 3 explores the range of investments that European colonial regimes made in tourism infrastructure in order to generate income from these African possessions. Colonial governments used both the local revenues and the political capital that tourism produced to reaffirm their imperial control. In general, colonies with natural touristic assets, including big game, extensive beaches, and moderate climates, were the most appealing to prospective visitors. Most of these settings were located in eastern and southern Africa, where the British and Portuguese had extensive territories, giving them a considerable advantage in touristic promotion over the French, Belgians, and other imperial powers, whose African territories were largely located in other parts of the continent or lacked the assets outlined above. Irrespective of which colonial power was touting tourism in its African territories, the minimally compensated African workers, upon whose backs the industry throughout the continent was built, maintained,

and expanded, were virtually invisible. By examining Africans' struggles to navigate these exacting environments, the chapter illuminates the impact of colonial-era tourism on their daily lives. In some cases, steady wages and frequent interactions with tourists afforded these workers financial autonomy and facilitated social ascension, enabling them to circumvent limitations in their home communities predicated on age and gender. However, most African tourism workers were poorly paid, exploited by a foreign-owned industry that was intended primarily to fill the coffers of private operators and colonial regimes.

Chapter 4 examines the decisions that newly independent African states made to cultivate tourist industries in support of national development objectives. Rather than redress the most egregious colonial-era policies enacted in the name of tourism, including the forced removal of indigenous residents from ancestral lands newly designated as game reserves, most emergent African nations simply extended them. Even popularly inclined governments, such as Tanzania's under Julius Nyerere, devised creative ways to reconcile capitalistic tourist industries with state-sponsored socialism. In practice, their investments in foreign tourists' fantasies were prompted by the continuing need to generate revenue and the associated ambition to create domestic employment opportunities. Sharing these core objectives, African states across the ideological spectrum invested in tourism infrastructure, which often generated high rates of return, while actively promoting travel destinations such as Tunisia's Mediterranean beaches and Kenya's celebrated game reserves in an attempt to attract both continental and international visitors. In this manner, an array of independent African states perpetuated the tourist agendas that their colonial predecessors had contrived.

Chapter 5 examines the history of the fabled African safari. Although the word means "journey" in Kiswahili, the tourist experience packaged under that name is a thoroughly Western invention. Safaris grew out of the adventures of the original "explorers" and matured as hunting expeditions before the First World War, but they are now intended for passive observers seeking to photograph—rather than slaughter—Africa's renowned wildlife. Today, photo-tourism constitutes the bedrock of the industry in East and Southern Africa, with safari experiences ranging from self-driving tours, to catered luxury getaways, to faux colonial-era "camps" that can cost thousands of dollars a day and include hot water, gourmet meals, and bottomless flutes of champagne. The more cosseted the participants in these genteel

safaris are, however, the more they operate within the "tourist bubble," in which guests are whisked directly from airports to resorts adjacent to or within game reserves and exclusively interact with an array of select, trained African staff for the duration of their stay. Many observers have criticized this insulated form of engagement with the continent as "inauthentic" and "superficial," but each year for millions of uncritical visitors from around the world seeking the ultimate "authentically" African experience, the safari remains the "trip of a lifetime."

Chapter 6 considers the experiences of tourists traveling to the continent from across the African diaspora. In particular, the chapter explores "roots" or "heritage" tourism, in which members of African diasporic communities "return" to the continent of their ancestors to "discover" and, thus, attempt to better understand both their heritage and, by extension, themselves. This form of tourism has attracted the attention of scholars interested in the following topics: the divergence between the ways in which members of these diasporic populations perceive Africa and its peoples; their range of experiences while on the continent; how these tourists negotiate these often-emotional journeys "home," only to find themselves received as foreigners and, ironically, perceived as "white"; and the ways that African guides, docents, performers, and merchants skillfully perform for these tourists, striving to fulfill these visitors' expectations of a relatable, yet no less exotic, Africa.

Chapter 7 examines more recent forms of tourism on the continent, including ecotourism, cultural tourism, "slum" or "poverty tourism," so-called voluntourism, and sex tourism. African states and tour operators readily promote these various types of visits, even if some are ethically or economically controversial. Irrespective of the financial motives of the promoters and tour organizers, these contemporary forms of tourism annually attract millions of visitors to the continent. This chapter also examines the most recent versions of trophy hunting, in which wealthy foreigners pay exorbitant fees for licenses to shoot disappearing big game. Although they fancy themselves modern-day Roosevelts, their experiences are entirely illusory: the animals are conveniently confined within private reserves, and any perils associated with the hunting of yesteryear have been befittingly removed. Although this form of tourism produces employment opportunities for local residents and significant revenue for African states and tour operators, excesses such as the illicit shooting in 2015 of Zimbabwe's beloved "Cecil the Lion" by a dentist from Minnesota can also generate unwanted

attention—and, in that case, criminal charges. The chapter concludes by re-engaging with the central questions and issues raised in this introductory chapter and considering how Africa's foreign guests and local hosts might experience the tourism industry going forward.