

The Evolution of the Ritual of Travel: From Migrant to Tourist

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Abstract

The business infrastructure and passenger processing techniques employed by the steamship companies, in the era of mass transatlantic migration that peaked in the early twentieth century, laid the groundwork for the rise of mass tourism in the second half of the twentieth century. By the start of the twentieth century transporting migrants across the Atlantic, the main source of profits for the transatlantic steamship companies, had evolved into an increasingly integrated transatlantic transit network. This transit network involved a transnational business infrastructure that encompassed ticketing, rail transport in both Europe and the United States, ocean transport, and several medical examinations all accomplished across multiple borders. Simultaneously, in the decks above steerage on ocean liners the steamship companies transported the first waves of international tourists in first-class and second-class. Tourist amenities, such as package holidays, were developed to cater to the needs of these upper class travelers. As transatlantic mass migration came to an end after the First World War, steamship companies began to combine their systems to transport large numbers of migrants with the amenities formerly offered only to cabin-class passengers. Even as airplanes replaced ocean liners as the primary mode of international passenger transportation, many of the business and passenger processing systems pioneered by steamship companies during the age of mass transatlantic migration would be adopted and adapted for a new era of mass tourism.