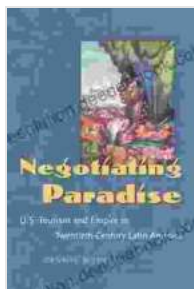


# Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America: A Historical Exploration of Exploitation and Resistance

The twentieth century witnessed a significant rise in tourism across Latin America, driven by both internal and external factors. While tourism has often been viewed as a positive force for economic development, its relationship with empire and colonialism has been complex and often exploitative. This article explores the historical interplay between tourism and empire in twentieth-century Latin America, highlighting the ways in which tourism has both perpetuated and challenged imperial power structures.

Tourism was closely intertwined with imperial expansion and domination in Latin America. Colonial powers, such as Spain, Portugal, and Britain, promoted tourism as a way to strengthen their control over their colonies. Tourists were encouraged to visit exotic lands, often depicted as "primitive" or "mysterious," to experience the "Other" and reinforce the superiority of European culture.

Through tourism, imperial powers sought to:



## Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America by Dennis Merrill

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3985 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 346 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



- **Exoticise and Commodify Local Cultures:** Tourism often presented Latin American cultures as exotic and primitive, reducing them to marketable attractions. This commodification of culture served to create a sense of distance and difference between tourists and local populations.
- **Control and Manage Travel:** Colonial powers established regulations and policies governing tourism, limiting access to certain areas, and ensuring that tourism benefited the colonial economy. This allowed them to maintain control over the movement of people and resources.
- **Extract Economic Value:** Tourism generated revenue for colonial powers, as tourists paid for accommodations, transportation, and souvenirs. This economic exploitation contributed to the maintenance of imperial power and privilege.

Despite its oppressive nature, imperial tourism also sparked resistance and critique from within Latin America. Local populations increasingly resented the ways in which tourism distorted their cultures and exploited their resources. Resistance took many forms:

- **Nationalism and Cultural Identity:** Latin American intellectuals and activists used tourism as a means to assert national identity and reject

imperial narratives. They sought to present their cultures on their own terms, challenging the exoticisation imposed by colonialism.

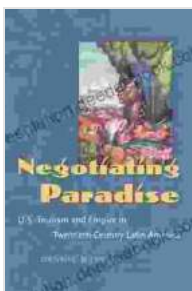
- **Political Activism:** Tourism became a target for political activism as groups protested against the exploitation of workers in the tourism industry and the negative environmental impacts of mass tourism.
- **Alternative Tourism Models:** Local communities developed alternative tourism models that emphasized sustainability, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. These models sought to challenge the imperial power structures embedded in conventional tourism.

After Latin America gained independence from colonial powers, tourism continued to play a significant role in shaping the region's development. However, the relationship between tourism and empire transitioned in the post-colonial era:

- **Economic Dependence and Inequality:** Tourism remained an important source of income for many Latin American countries, but it also perpetuated economic dependence on foreign markets. Benefits from tourism were often concentrated in the hands of a few, while local communities and workers faced exploitation and low wages.
- **Neocolonialism and Cultural Hegemony:** Tourism often reinforced neocolonial power dynamics, as foreign corporations and investors played a dominant role in the industry. Western ideas and values continued to shape tourism practices, marginalising local perspectives and cultural diversity.

- **Resistance and Alternative Tourism:** Resistance to imperial tourism persisted in the post-colonial era, with local communities and activists advocating for more equitable and sustainable tourism models. Alternative forms of tourism, such as community-based ecotourism and cultural heritage tourism, emerged as ways to challenge neocolonial power structures.

Tourism in twentieth-century Latin America was a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, deeply intertwined with empire and colonialism. While tourism has often been seen as a positive force for economic development, its historical relationship with power and exploitation cannot be ignored. The resistance to imperial tourism and the emergence of alternative models have shaped the industry's development, challenging traditional power structures and promoting more equitable and sustainable practices. Understanding the historical legacy of tourism and empire in Latin America is crucial for creating a more just and inclusive tourism industry in the future.



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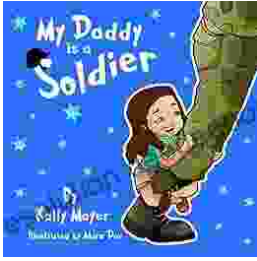
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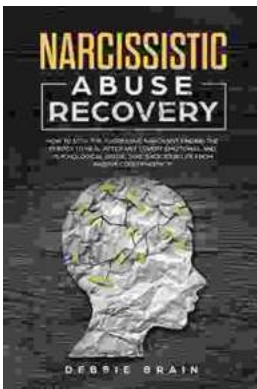
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