

## Chapter 4

# **Tourism in Augustan Society (44 BC–AD 69)**

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This chapter discusses the significance of tourism in classical antiquity. It focuses on Augustan Rome and its Empire between 44 BC and AD 69, the period between the assassination of Caesar and the end of the reign of Nero and of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. It shows that, contrary to common beliefs and assumptions, tourism existed long before the famous Grand Tour of Mediterranean Europe by English aristocrats. The sophisticated Augustan society offered everything that is commonly regarded as typically modern (not to say post-modern) in terms of tourism: museums, guide-books, seaside resorts with drunk and noisy holidaymakers at night, candle-lit dinner parties in fashionable restaurants, promiscuous hotels, unavoidable sightseeing places, spas, souvenir shops, postcards, over-talkative and boring guides, concert halls and much more besides.

Methodologically, this chapter is based upon three main types of primary sources: archaeological evidence, inscriptions and Latin literature. Most Latin authors mention facts related to travel and tourism. Their names are here given in their common English version (e.g. Virgil for Vergilius) and references are made in a conventional way, mentioning not the page or year of publication of a specific edition but the exact localisation of the text, e.g. Propertius 1, 11, 30: book 1, piece 11, line 30, making it possible to find the quoted passage in any version. **Archaeological evidence** concerns transport (e.g. the paved roads facilitating travel, such as the 'Queen of Roads', the Appian Way from Puteoli to Rome, by which Saint Paul came to Rome [*Acts* 28.13]) and accommodation, notably the inns discovered in the ashes of Pompeii and Herculaneum, whose plans are reminiscent of the European hostelries of the 16th century (Bosi, 1979: 237–56; Mau, 1899; Tucker, 1910: 22). **Inscriptions** too are important as they give evidence in a very human way: they were made by average Augustan travellers and not by erudite people or scholars. They prove that yesterday as today, travellers often wish to inscribe indelible marks of their passage

on stone, like many graffiti found in Egypt. For example ‘I, Gaius Numidius Eros, was here in year 28 of Caesar, returning from India, in the month Phamenoth’ (Braund, 1985: 277) or ‘I, Lysa, slave of Publius Annius Plocannus, came here in year 35 of Caesar’ (Ehrenberg, 1976: 360). Two **bodies of literature** are innovatively put together: texts about ancient history (such as Casson, 1974; Frebaugh, 1923; Fredouille, 1992) and texts about tourism studies (such as Horne, 1984; MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990). Epistemologically, this analysis relocates the study of tourism in Augustan society in the framework of current discourse on travel and tourism, by applying the tools and concepts developed by tourism studies to a discipline that usually follows different methods: the study of ancient history.

Historians do refer to tourism as a common phenomenon in Ancient Rome but they rarely linger on the subject. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* recognises that ‘a regular tourist industry on quite a modern scale seems to have developed’ at the end of the Republic (Hammond, 1970: 1090). However, specialists do not expand on the topic: for example Cary only dedicates a few lines to tourism, at the very end of the chapter entitled ‘Social Life’ (Cary, 1940: 161); Dudley (1975) has one chapter about ‘travel’ (Chapter 37), Treble one chapter about ‘roads and travel’ (Chapter 11) and Tucker one chapter about ‘travel within the Empire’ (Chapter 2) but they do not reflect on the very notions of travel and tourism because they are (pure) historians: tourism is not their preoccupation or area of particular interest. Tucker (1910: 22) indeed wrote: ‘We must not dwell too long upon this topic. Suffice it to say that travel was frequent and extensive, whether for military and political business, for commerce or for pleasure’. Hopkins (1978: Preface) addresses this critique to classical historians: unlike modern historians and medievalists they have ‘isolated themselves’ by refusing to ‘take advantage of developments in the social sciences’ and ‘the results are clear: ... a gap between modern concepts and ancient sources’. This is particularly true for two works dealing with travel and tourism in the Ancient World (Badger, 1920; Casson, 1974): they have a purely descriptive approach, telling many details and anecdotes but analysing nothing.

## Lexicological Insight

Lexicology provides an emic view into Augustan tourism, around three key concepts (*peregrinatio*, *otium*, *hospitium*) and the semantic fields they open. In Latin, a person who travels around is a *peregrinator*. This substantive etymologically means a person who has gone through lands (*per* meaning through, *ager* meaning land), which suggests quite a long

trip rather than a short, local, one-day excursion. *Peregrinator* (a masculine term, as befits a society in which most tourists were men, with the exception of a few rich widows or other independent women) comes from the verb *peregrinare*, which has an ambiguous meaning: it means 'to go abroad, to travel' (Cicero, *Brutus* 13, 51) as well as 'to be a stranger' (Cicero, *De Finibus* 3, 12, 40). The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1968: 1335) focuses on the notion of travelling ('to go, to travel abroad or away from home; to travel in thought or in imagination; to reside, stay or sojourn abroad') and gives the adjective *peregrinus* the connotation of foreignness ('of persons: foreign, alien; of other creatures: not native, exotic; belonging to foreigners, outlandish; of places: situated abroad; not Roman', p. 1335). In the language itself, travelling is thus associated with the idea of foreignness: the Augustan *peregrinator* is far from home (*domi*, the root of domicile, domestic, as opposed to *peregri*), in a foreign, and potentially hostile, environment. Augustan travellers were aware that they remained strangers wherever they were: this corresponds to the much discussed view of the tourist as 'the Other' and tourism as 'The Quest for the Other' (Van Den Berge, 1994).

Another important term shedding some cultural light on Augustan tourism is *otium*, a key concept in Latin civilisation. As opposed to *negotium* (the Latin root of negotiate, *négoce* in French meaning business, trade), *otium* is 'unoccupied or spare time, as needed for doing something, "the time", "the leisure"; freedom from business, especially as devoted to cultural pursuits; rest or relaxation from work, a holiday; the productions of one's leisure' (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1968: 1277). The term production is important: if *otium* is linked to idleness, it is not a negative idleness but a productive one, the source of relaxation and well-being or even the fruit of leisure; indeed, Ovid calls his poems '*otia nostra*' (*Tristia* 2, 224). Highlighting the importance of *otium* is a way to exclude all forms of travel that would modernly be described as business tourism: tourism is here understood as entailing a focus on leisure pursuits. Consequently, neither a merchant with his slaves and his bales, nor a body of gladiators taken to fight in the amphitheatre of some provincial town, nor a horseman scouring along with a despatch of the emperor nor a troop of actors and tumblers could be regarded as tourists as *otium* was not the key of their trip (Tucker, 1910: 23).

The third important Latin concept related to Augustan tourism is *hospitium*, whose meaning is much stronger than hospitality as a kindness in welcoming guests or strangers. *Hospitium* refers to 'the permanent relationship existing between host and guest, the ties of hospitality' (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1968: 807). If in the city he is about to visit, there lives a

person with whom he happens to be linked by **hospitium** (e.g. because his father had once put up or helped their father), an Augustan traveller is bound to stay at their place, where he will be received with honour. He can stay there many weeks, he will be treated like a prince but if ever this person (or someone recommended by them) visits him, he will be obliged to offer the same services.

Daremberg and Saglio's well respected *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines* (1899) devoted six pages to the article *hospitium*, explicating it as a religious duty deeply committing people to each other. This religious dimension is notably attested by the adjective *hospitalis* referring to the gods protecting the ties of hospitality (such as Jovis Hospitalis) and by the mythological legend of Philemon and Baucis. The old peasant **Philemon and his wife Baucis** agreed one night to put up two unknown travellers whom everyone in the village had repelled. The travellers were actually Jupiter and Mercury: to thank Philemon and Baucis, the gods offered to realise their dearest wish. The old couple only wanted to finish their life together. Jupiter destroyed all other houses in the village and turned Philemon and Baucis into two trees growing together at the door of his temple: an oak and a lime-tree (the Augustan poet Ovid has used this legend in his *Metamorphoses*). Such messages had two major consequences for the expression and development of tourism in Augustan society. **First**, the existence of such networks of potential hosts strongly encouraged Romans to travel to cities and regions even if they had no business reasons to go there, only visiting places for *otium's* sake: *hospitium* contributed to the development of tourism because people knew where they would be welcome and accommodated. **Second**, if *hospitium* facilitated tourism, it stunted the development of hotels. Few hotels were needed indeed, as travellers would understandably rather go where they would find a free, welcoming roof. Existing hotels had names such as Cock Inn, Eagle or Elephant (Tucker, 1910: 21), and were of poor quality, mainly catering for two kinds of guests: travellers from modest backgrounds, who did not have links of *hospitium* because they were freedmen (i.e. ex-slaves) or parvenus (Frebaugh, 1923), and travellers uninterested in comfort but attracted by the licentious, promiscuous atmosphere of the place: Casson indeed compares Augustan hotels with brothels and describes how waitresses were waiting for guests and tempting them (Casson, 1974: 263).

## The Augustan Grand Tour

Many sources attest to the existence of a **formalised tourist itinerary**, a series of all-important sightseeing places, a sort of 'obligatory route'

(Horne, 1984: 10). Augustan tourists were neither attracted by the western Mediterranean area (from Spain to Carthage) nor by the rich areas of Syria and Palestine (Antioch, Jerusalem). Many historians describe the Augustan Grand Tour as a trip to Greece (via Sicily), then to Asia Minor via some islands on the Aegean Sea and to Egypt, then back to Rome (Caspari, 1940: 161; Dudley, 1975: chap. 37; Treble, 1930: 93). Most of the main Augustan sightseeing places (if not all) are currently popular again:

- **In Italy:** from Ostia (port of Rome) or Puteoli (port of Napoli), via the Straits of Messina (possibly calling into Sicily to visit the temples of Artemis and Athena in Syracuse and to see Mount Etna).
- **In Greece:** Delphi (for the oracle of Apollo); Athens (the Acropolis, the port town); Corinth (and its isthmus); Epidaurus; Olympia (especially Phidias' statue of Zeus); and Sparta. Popular Greek islands included Delos for the sanctuary of Apollo, Samothrace and Rhodes.
- **In Asia Minor:** Cnidus (the home of Praxiteles' famous statue of Aphrodite); Ephesus; Smyrna; Colophon and Didyma for the local oracles of Apollo and, most importantly, 'Homer's Country' as the site of the Trojan war. The Trojan site occupies a particular place in Augustan tourist geography, between politics and mythology. After the Trojan war (1193–84 BC according to the tradition), the city was left in ruins; a new town called Ilion was rebuilt about 700 BC by Greek settlers but it remained quite modest until Julius Caesar (Augustus' predecessor, his great-uncle and adopted father) realised that politically and mythologically Troy was important both for him and for Rome. An understanding of mythology is necessary here. Priam (King of Troy) had many children, among them Pâris (whose Judgement and love for Helen, wife of Menelas King of Sparta, provoked the Trojan war) and Kreousa, wife of Aeneas (the son of Venus–Aphrodite). After Troy was destroyed by the Achaeans (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Ulysses etc.), Aeneas fled with his son Iule. After many adventures, they arrived in Northern Italy where they laid the foundations of many cities and were the ancestors of Romulus, the founder of Rome. Julius Caesar's family claimed to be descended from Iule (hence the name Julius) and, thus, from Aeneas and Venus. As a consequence, Julius Caesar felt deeply involved in the Trojan legend and viewed the site both as a national shrine and as the root of the divine origin of his family. He therefore gave

honours to the city, independence, grants and exemption from taxes. Troy soon became a thriving business centre as the official custodian of Homer's country. Professional guides would help visitors identify all places mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*, for example the plain where the battles had taken place or the cave where Paris gave his Judgement. Tourists to Troy were at the same time visiting the site of Homer's legends, celebrating the Trojan origin of Rome and worshipping an extraordinary lineage from Venus to Augustus via Aeneas, Iule, Romulus and Julius Caesar.

- **Egypt as a whole** was a tourist paradise offering Romans an exotic landscape, a different way of life, unusual monuments and relatively easy travel. Main tourist attractions in Egypt included: the Lighthouse, the tomb of Alexander, the temple of Serapis, the sanctuary of Pan and the Museum (i.e. the Great Library) in Alexandria; Heliopolis (which was already in ruins; Augustus in 10 BC took two of its obelisks, which are still in Rome); Memphis (for its temple of Ptah and because it was the starting point for visits to the Pyramids); Crocodilopolis; Abydos for its famous Memnonium, the temple of the Pharaoh Seti; the Valley of the Kings and Thebes (which came to the forefront of Egyptian tourism in 27 BC when the statue of Memnon allegedly started to talk every morning).

Just like their camera-carrying descendents, Augustan tourists were interested in keeping pictorial mementoes of what they saw. If they were talented for sketching, they could sit down with papyrus, pen and ink or wax tablets and stylus, like 19th-century painters carrying their water-colour boxes, or they could ask a professional, quick-working miniaturist to draw their portrait with Athens' Parthenon or Delphi's Temple of Apollo as a background. In terms of **souvenirs**, as found in excavations and now in many museums, the amateur art lover visiting Athens could get a replica in miniature of Phidias' illustrious statue of Athena or some artefacts, paintings, glass bottles, models of statuettes in silver or just terracotta and pottery (even obscene pottery, according to Lucian, *Amores* 11). In *Acts* (19: 24–41), Saint Paul narrates that when he arrived at Ephesus, he had trouble with Demetrius, a silversmith specialising in 'silver temples of Diana' who opposed Saint Paul whose Christianity was going to ruin his business. This small-scale commercialisation is interesting in three respects. **First**, it illustrates in antiquity what MacCannell conceptualises as 'the spurious' as 'composed out of the information, memories, images and other representations which become detached

from genuine cultural elements' (MacCannell, 1976: 147), as opposed to genuine structures 'composed of the values and material culture manifest in the "true" sights' (MacCannell, 1976: 155). **Second**, it confirms the well-known cultural fact that the Augustans were good semioticians, or at least that they liked deciphering signs, which here corresponds to Urry's view that 'tourism involves the collection of signs' (Urry, 1990: 3). **Third**, it shows that souvenirs and similar memorabilia are not at all modern inventions or signs of modernity.

## Augustan Monuments and Tourist Attractions

The list of the **Seven Wonders of the World** (which entered the Hellenistic tradition in the third century BC) exemplifies the Augustan preference for glorious monuments rather than natural wonders. It gives a good idea of what the Ancient regarded as noteworthy: the Pyramids of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse at Alexandria. All of them are human built, all of them recall a glorious past and are stopping-places on the Augustan Grand Tour (except the Colossus, which had collapsed during an earthquake around 224 BC, and the Gardens of Babylon which were probably too far in the East to attract visitors from Rome).

Greek and Roman temples were a favourite type of attraction: every city had several and they drew visitors from all origins and walks of life. Initially they were not places of worship where crowds could have gathered but only represented the abode of a god through the majestic statue standing in the centre. Worship occurred outside, in front of the temple, around an altar. Augustan travellers visiting places of devotion did not have access to the back area (the inside, reserved for high priests) but could attend ceremonies such as processions, prayers and sacrifices (McKeever, 1995: 118). In *The Tourist*, MacCannell built on Goffman's structural division of **front and back regions** and applied this pattern to tourist places. In his continuum from front to back, Roman temples would be at stage 4 as 'a back region that is open to outsiders' (MacCannell, 1976: 101). For example, Augustans entering the temple of Ptah in Memphis surely had mixed feelings: on one hand, they could recognise familiar signs (in Hellenistic times Ptah was assimilated to the Greek god Hephaistos, thus corresponding to the Roman god Vulcan) and could take part in the ceremony but, on the other hand, the ritual remained culturally Egyptian and this distance made visitors aware that they were only visitors, tolerated outsiders.

Besides, most temples started to fulfil another cultural role to become what is nowadays called a museum: they started to contain large collections of statues, paintings, stuffed animals, artefacts or relics such as Tantalus' bones in Argos and Julius Caesar's sword in the temple of Mars in Rome. These temples were not primarily conceived as museums but, as analysed by Horne, monuments often see their function changed by tourists: just as 'the Parthenon was not built as a ruin celebrating western civilisation, Hagia Sophia was not erected to commemorate Byzantine culture [and] the Winter Palace was not built to commemorate the baroque' (Horne, 1984: 30), the Hellenistic temples were not constructed for Augustan tourists interested in the religious syncretism that gradually associated Greek, Roman and Egyptian divinities whose popular worship involved various secret rites. Is it then still appropriate to refer to those temples as tourist settings? **MacCannell lists four characteristics of tourist settings: the only reason for visiting them is to see them; they are physically adjacent to serious social activity; they contain objects that have specialised use in specific, often esoteric routines; and they are open, at least during specified times, to visitation from outsiders** (MacCannell, 1976: 100). **Are these criteria met in the case of Augustan tourists** and temples? Visitors indeed went to see them because of their beauty, fame and of the treasures they contained, and not for religious purposes; they were generally located in cities or at least in places where flows of visitors had brought about the set up of specific tourist structures; they contained objects of worship and sacrifice as a consequence of the initially religious dimension of the place, and most of them were open to the public, especially because visitors had to pay some entrance fees, either money, food or objects (Hacquard, 1952). The four criteria are met, so temples in the Ancient World can definitely be regarded as tourist settings: for Augustan tourists, temples were very much tourist places, like cathedrals or churches for today's tourists.

## Staged Authenticity

Another concept developed by MacCannell and now well established in tourism studies is **staged authenticity** and it too proves useful to analyse Augustan tourism. One text by Strabo gives a good example of staged authenticity, in the case of performances offered by locals for tourists at Syene (Aswan) on the First Cataract on the Nile. Local boatmen would put on a special act they had prepared for visitors: working their way upstream to a point beyond the cataract, they turned around, set their craft drifting downstream and then shot the rapids (Strabo's Geography XVII:

817). This setting (in a theatrical sense) is a 'pseudo-event' in Boorstin's meaning: inauthenticity was flagrant, the boatmen were not in danger, they just made spectators believe they were present at a real near-disaster (Boorstin, 1962). Were the spectators fooled? Did they even care at all? Strabo unfortunately did not comment on the issue of tourists' expectations and reactions in staged situations, yet another example by the same Strabo can help us to understand the Augustans' concern for authenticity.

The talking statue of Memnon at Thebes was well known in Antiquity, with a fame comparable today to Paris' Eiffel Tower or the Sydney Opera House. Most people would have heard of it, although only a minority had really seen it, or rather heard it (in that particular instance, it was less 'the tourist gaze' that mattered than 'the tourist ear'). Strabo, who went to Thebes in 1 BC, wrote: 'An hour after sunrise, I heard the sound – whether it came from the base of the statue or was deliberately made by one of the people standing around, I cannot say for sure' (Strabo's Geography 17: 816). At stake were the questions of authenticity and the audience's gullibility. Strabo was distrustful and did not believe that the god's statue was really talking. He did not take part in the *communitas* of the place with the other spectators but kept a critical distance or, put another way, he did not behave like a credulous tourist but tried to understand what could be behind the strange phenomenon he was facing. By suggesting that someone by the statue could be responsible for the sounds, Strabo is no more a passive tourist but becomes analytical – in a way he is what Boorstin calls an intellectual (Boorstin, 1962). Strabo's uncertainty towards the talking statue can be regarded as the Augustan birth of a tourist consciousness, the awareness that tourism can be based on trickery and artfulness.

## Augustan Destinations: Seaside Tourism

The Augustan Grand Tour was very similar to the famous English Grand Tour: 'Well-to-do youths, like Caesar and Cicero, might be found making the "Grand Tour" of Greece and Asia Minor in the same way as wealthy Englishmen of the seventeenth [*sic*] century travelling in France and Italy to finish their education' (Treble, 1930: 93). Yet just as only a few Britons went on the Grand Tour of France and Italy, in socio-economic terms the Augustan Grand Tour was mainly the privilege of two types of people: young men from good families, sent to Greece to complete their education, and citizens from the highest ranks, such as senators and equestrians. To embark on the Grand Tour, one needed time and money, yet this does not mean that the majority of Augustans did not have access to

tourism pleasures. In summer the exodus from Rome was very heavy, notably because of the nerve-racking and oppressive heat there. Except in times of crisis, the senate suspended its sessions in August and households used to leave Rome for the cooler air of the seaside or the countryside.

The shoreline from Rome to Naples was comparable to the contemporary French Riviera. The most famous resorts were in the Bay of Naples, from Cumae and Cape Misenum on the west, to Sorrento peninsula just past Mount Vesuvius on the east. There, beautiful villas 'were so close to each other that the fish were feeling cramped' wrote the poet Horace humorously (*Carmen Saeculare* 3.1: 33–7). In the first century BC, the owners of these villas were the potentates of the Republic: Caesar, Lucullus, Pompey, Mark Antony (D'Arms, 1970). 'By the end of the republican era the habit of villegiatura had become firmly established among the wealthier Italian households' (Caspari, 1940: 160). These people spent a good part of their time visiting each other, organising sophisticated dinner parties. Riding along the shores in litters and going on excursions in oar-propelled yachts were two popular activities (Casson, 1974: 142). Less wealthy holidaymakers went to the same resorts and could enjoy themselves with other activities, some of them related to the specificities of the place (renting a boat to go fishing, shopping for souvenirs), most of them being replicas of recreation forms in Rome: baths (thanks to the hot springs along the shoreline), cultural or sporting events (Puteoli had two amphitheatres offering gladiators' fights as well as theatre plays, concerts with dancers, acrobats and jugglers), dining in restaurants, shopping or strolling at night in the illuminated streets. In Pompeii, excavation revealed that one main avenue some 500 yards long had 45 shops on either side; since each kept at least one lamp burning, there was a light every 10 yards or so (Mau, 1899). These seaside resorts reproduced the life and society of Rome in terms of social status and cultural habits: it was Rome away from Rome. Augustan tourists did not want to find themselves in a foreign, unusual, strange environment. The best example is probably Baiae. Located 10 miles west from Naples, **Baiae** is described by the historian Caspari as 'the queen of Italian holiday resorts' for 'fashionable society' (Caspari, 1940: 160), not only the richest Augustans but all those willing to enjoy themselves, often in a disorganised way that could only arouse moralists' wrath: 'Why must I look at drunks staggering along the shore or noisy boating parties ... Who wants to listen to the squabbles of nocturnal serenaders?' complained Seneca (*Epistulae Morales* 51: 4–16). Baiae was popular for its night life where 'unmarried girls are common property, old men act like young boys and lots of young boys like young girls', wrote Varro (quoted in Nonius, *De Compendiosa Doctrina*: 153–4).

This promiscuity gave the resort its reputation of depravity, which is why the Augustan poet Propertius urged his beloved Cynthia to leave Baiae and its corruption: 'A pereant Baiae crimen amoris aquae! Perish, waters of Baiae, crime against love!' (Book 1, 11: 30).

## Augustan Destinations: Green Tourism

The Augustans did not like mountain landscapes: the Alps were for them mere protuberances and obstructions to traffic, a view common until the 19th century. The only exception was Mount Etna in Sicily, which drew tourists who made the ascent partly to admire the colours of sunrise from the inn erected near the summit (Caspari, 1940: 161), and partly because of its mythological background: the giant Egkelados (enemy of the Olympians) and Typhon the monster were said to live in the volcano, where the forges of Vulcan (God of fire, Roman equivalent to Hephaistos) were installed. Once more, one can see that Augustan tourism is often linked to mythology, or at least to a mythological past: as noted by Cotterell (1980: 282): 'the Romans of the Augustan Age were a nation who lived in the past'; at a tourist level, it means that, as Dudley put it, the Romans were going 'to classical and historical sites rather than to the picturesque' (Dudley, 1975: 225).

If Augustan tourists were not attracted by the mountains, the countryside did appeal to them. The Alban and Sabine hills on the East and Southeast of Rome (around Tusculanum) were quite popular. Cicero's dialogue *Tusculanae Disputationes* is set in an elegant villa on the Alban hills, offering some appreciable coolness in summer, and on the Sabine hills was located the famous farm that Maecenas gave to Horace. Most of those country retreats were luxurious country estates (beautifully decorated inside, with mosaics, fine furniture, paintings and outside well-tended gardens, fountains, statues) but the presence of huge surrounding farms was of vital importance (McKeever, 1995: 68–71). These estates were self-sufficient (with everything from food and wine to bakeries and bath-houses) thanks to the farm and, in a way, the luxurious *villa urbana* (where the owner lived when he visited the estate) was superfluous. However, some villas were built purely as luxury retreats without working farms attached. A good example is Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, extending over 120 hectares, containing all kinds of buildings inspired by Hadrian's favourite sights from his travels around Greece and Egypt (for example the replica of Canopus, an Egyptian town, with statues along a canal, as well as theatres, temples and libraries). It is true that Hadrian's villa dates back to the early second century AD and, therefore, does not belong to the period

considered in this chapter, but similar (albeit less lavish) villas existed in the Augustan Age.

### **Augustan Destinations: Urban Tourism**

In summer, Rome was a popular destination for non-Romans. In AD 1 the city of Rome had more than one million inhabitants and its facilities were attracting tourists who in Rome certainly did as the Romans: they would go to the baths and relax, play dice or board-games, attend chariot-racing or gladiators' fights in the Colosseum, pay a visit to a Greek restaurant, a concert hall or a shopping centre with fresh slaves from Armenia or Africa. Just as Romans travelled to visit sites and monuments linked to the past (be it a mythological past such as Olympia where Zeus and Cronos fought for the conquest of power, a heroic past such as the site of the Trojan war, or a human past such as Alexandria), tourists went to Rome for the sake of heritage, for example for the fig-tree at the foot of the Palatine Hill where the cradle holding Remus and Romulus was allegedly overturned or for the shepherd's hut where the twin founders of Rome were reputedly raised. And just as Romans used to journey to Greece and Egypt to admire buildings glorifying humanity's craft and genius, tourists to Rome were interested in the new Rome and her grandiose monuments, palaces and forums (such as Caesar's Forum and Augustus' Forum). Suetonius reports that Augustus boasted that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble (August 28: 3). Last but not least and in very modern vein: Rome by night. Like Pompeii, Rome had a system of lighting in the main streets since the early third century enabling 'flâneurs' to go strolling safely at night (Homo, 1971: 583).

### **Augustan Special Interest Tourism**

In Augustan society, three types of special interest tourism can be identified: health tourism, oracle tourism and games tourism. Medicine was not very well developed in Augustan society and the average lifespan of Augustans was about 40 years because of epidemics of disease that had no known cure. Doctors used to prepare soothing ointments and poultices for treating sores and when they had to perform operations there were no anaesthetics, so Augustans often travelled in the hope of finding some treatment. The journey itself was sometimes considered a possible treatment: Celsus (the medical authority of the Augustan Era) wrote that 'in the case of tuberculosis, if the patient has the strength, a long sea voyage and change of air is called for... For this purpose, the voyage from Italy to Alexandria is perfect' (*Artes* 3: 22: 8). According to Badger, this

voyage lasted about 10 days (Badger, 1920: 137). Those who could not afford to sail to Alexandria could visit one of the several mineral springs (Aquaes, literally waters), comparable to the modern spas that often are the descendants of Roman sites: Aquaes Calidae has been rebaptised Vichy; Aquaes Sextiae: Aix-en-Provence; Aquaes Sulis: Bath; and Aquaes Mattiacae: Wiesbaden. Mourre (1986: 4546) describes this form of health tourism, whose importance the Sicilian-Greek historian Diodorus attested: 'Many people throughout Sicily who are troubled with their own peculiar ills go to Lipari and by using the baths become healthy again in incredible fashion' (*Bibliotheke Historike* 5: 10).

When Augustans had a problem or a question, they used to consult **oracles** (which is linked to the fact that the Augustan society was marked by widespread superstition (McKeever, 1995: 118)). Apollo was the fortune-telling god par excellence; Romans would not hesitate to travel far away to consult one of his oracles, for example at Delphi (Greece), Delos (Aegean Sea) or Claros (Asia Minor). Other highly reputed oracles were Trophonius' near Lebadea in Greece, the temple of Fortuna at Praeneste near Rome and the diverse oracles of Heracles in Greece, all established in remote times (Casson, 1974). Health and religion were combined in the case of visits to Asclepius' sanctuaries. Asclepius was the Greek god of medicine, son of Apollo, whose cult arrived in Rome in the third century BC. In the Augustan Age, his three main sanctuaries were Epidauros in Greece (where the god was born), the Greek island of Cos (home of Hippocrates and his school of medicine) and Pergamon in Asia Minor (where the famous physician Galen practised). The procedure was very ritualised: the patient entered the sanctuary, took a bath to get purified, entered the god's temple, prayed, spread a pallet and laid down to spend the night there. While asleep they would wait for the god to visit them, and either be advised on what treatment to take, or be magically cured (Edelstein & Edelstein, 1945: 240). On the walls of the dormitory were plaques inscribed with testimonials to the god's effectiveness. **Pausanias** described that 'on these plaques are engraved the names of men and women who have been healed by Asclepius, together with the disease from which each suffered, and the manner of the cure' (*Periegesis Hellados* 2.27.3). The belief that Asclepius would be benevolent enough to cure those who visited his sanctuary shows how tourism was linked to religion and health; this mix of health tourism and religious tourism illustrates how human structures (the dormitory, the management of thousands of visitors) had to adapt to collective faith in a way quite comparable to Lourdes today, yet it is not appropriate to design visits to Asclepius' sanctuaries as pilgrimage because visitors were never part of a collective

movement but kept their individuality (as opposed to religious ceremonies when 'conventional social ties are suspended, an intensive bonding *communitas* is experienced' (Urry, 1990: 10)).

**Sports tourism**, travelling to attend games, was quite common in Augustan society. Augustans enjoyed many forms of games such as athletics (the traditional Greek games: the Olympics in honour of Zeus, the Pythian Games for Apollo or the Isthmian Games for Poseidon) or more recent innovations, those organised by emperors for public entertainment featuring chariot racing, boxing, theatrical performances and gladiators' fights (Fredouille, 1992: 105). McKeever compared Roman supporters' fervour with 'the fervour of today's football fans' (McKeever, 1995: 104). The Romans too wanted good spectacles and their emperors had huge stadia built for them: the Colosseum (capacity 50,000) and the Circus Maximus (250,000, much more than any existing stadium). In chariot-racing, collisions were particularly appreciated (dramatic confusions of wheels and broken limbs). Gladiators' games were very popular, when gladiators fought each other (or wild animals) to the death: blood, representations of cruelty and violence, somehow reminiscent of the *clou du spectacle* of Sparta's yearly festival in honour of Artemis – the whipping of young Spartan boys, a spectacle all the more sadistic since some boys died under the lash. Many sources mentioned these games and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 6: 20), Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 18.1) and Cicero (*Tusc. Dip.* 2: 34), offer evidence that some writers felt that there was something peculiar in tourists' enthusiasm for this type of entertainment.

## Tourism as Interpretation: Augustan Tourist Guides

**Guide-books** existed in the Augustan Age (a very popular one was Pausanias' *Guidebook of Greece*) but most of them were preparatory readings. Books were then handwritten on thick papyrus or leather sheets, thus quite heavy to carry. In the absence of handy guide-books, Augustan tourists would hire guides. Finding a guide seemed very easy: 'I was going around the colonnades, in the sanctuary of Dionysus', said a character in one of **Lucian's** satirical sketches, 'examining each one of the paintings, and right away two or three people ran up to tell me about them for a small fee' (Lucian, *Amores* 8). Tourists merely had to wait for potential guides to offer them their services. Augustan satirists featured guides who were not much appreciated, as shown by this prayer: 'Zeus, protect me from your guides at Olympia, and you, Athena, from yours at Athens' (Varro as quoted by Nonius, 419: 4). Augustan guides shared with some

modern ones the inability to stop talking once launched on a subject: about a group visiting Delphi, **Plutarch** wrote that 'the guides went through their standard speech, paying no attention whatsoever to our entreaties to cut the talk short and leave out most of the explanations on the inscriptions and epitaphs' (*Moralia* 395a). The Greek Plutarch (46–120) lived just after the Augustan period, yet his comments on travel and tourism are very valuable: in the same text, about a Greek traveller he met in Delphi, Cleombrotus of Sparta, he wrote that this man had been 'wandering about Egypt and around the country of the Troglodytes' and had sailed 'far down the Red Sea, not for trade but because he loved seeing things and learning about them': the perfect example of a tourist.

Guides also had an important function as culture brokers. Augustan tourism was not really cross-cultural tourism (that would require from guides that they translate aspects of a culture for those from a different culture): it took place within a generic frame of cultural reference, the Roman-Hellenistic world. To develop further an example mentioned earlier, Augustans visiting the temple of Ptah in Memphis could understand several things (because Ptah was assimilated to Hephaistos and Vulcan) but some aspects were foreign to them (for example hieroglyphs). For this reason, they needed guides not as mentors (because the spiritual dimension was not the key issue) but as information-givers. The important distinction made by Cohen (1985: 5–29) between information and interpretation is relevant here: the communicative role of Augustan tourist guides did not involve interpretation but only explanation in a narrative way, mainly reciting mythological stories: 'Abolish fabulous tales from Greece, and the guides there would all die of starvation' (Lucian *Philopseudes* 4). Pausanias (2: 23: 5–6) indeed confirms that Augustan guides were primarily story-tellers: 'the guides at Argos know very well that not all the stories they tell are true, but they tell them anyway'. Questions of authenticity and gullibility are raised here again. Did Augustan tourists believe all the stories they were told? Did they believe that they were shown the cave where Zeus was born (in Crete), for example? Pliny often used a character called Caius Licinius Mucianus, a gullible sightseer who believed everything the guides told him: a spring that could flow with wine or a special elephant that had learned to speak and write Greek, which proves that, at times, the guides' words became more important than the sites themselves or, as Horne put it: 'What matters is what [visitors] are told they are seeing. The fame of the object becomes its meaning' (Horne, 1984: 10).

## The Augustan Tourist Gaze

The Augustan tourist gaze, to use Urry's famous phrase, was a gaze of curiosity – as were probably all tourist gazes. Urry wrote that '[W]hen we go away we look at the environment with interest and curiosity' but surely all Ancient authors could have written the same. Although the Roman mind was deeply concerned about moral seriousness and respect for the past and its tradition, its curiosity had few limits, hence all the expeditions launched towards and over the empire's borders to discover the unknown (Cotterell, 1980: 283). In the same way, tourists and travellers were always willing to be initiated into new cults, which in our context would mean that all visitors to Bangkok would be Buddhists when they came home. The Augustan tourist gaze is curious towards what is far, not near, as illustrated by Pliny (*Epistulae* 8: 20: 1–2) who wrote in the late first century AD:

We travel long roads and cross the water to see what we disregard when it is under our eyes... There are a number of things in this city of ours and its environs which we have not even heard of, much less seen ; yet, if they were in Greece or Egypt or Asia, we would have heard all about them, read all about them, looked over all there was to see.

Travelling was motivated by the desire to know more about remote and different things, no matter how interesting one's own neighbourhood might be. Another modern comparison is possible here, as the Augustans were like the New Yorker who has ascended the Eiffel Tower twice but will never visit the Statue of Liberty. The Augustan tourist gaze paid attention only to objects considered worthwhile: it was a selective, intellectual gaze that expected some quality from the objects gazed at. Travel in search of such satisfactions necessitated an adequate transport system.

## Transportation Issues

The famous network of Roman roads was first developed for military purposes (the army built roads as they conquered new lands, then they were used for trade and tourism as well (McKeever, 1995: 90)). 'To manage their empire, the Romans built a magnificent network of roads, on which they could travel as much as 100 miles a day using relays of horses furnished from rest posts five or six miles apart' (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1995: 24). This is comparable to the fact that in the USA 'the national system of interstate highways ... and the jet airline have both been tremendous boons to tourism, yet neither was developed expressly for that purpose' (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1995: 24), as another example of

applying military technology to civilian use as a feature of modernity. Romans were very proud of their roads, even if they were not as safe as they were admirable. In one elegy (3, 16), the poet Propertius relates how at midnight he once received a note from his beloved Cynthia who was sending for him, yet he hesitated, arguing that travelling at night could be dangerous (because of bandits and highwaymen), before he romantically realised that for lovers all roads would be safe at any time.

Voyaging was not much safer because the sea had its dangers as well. In the Augustan age there were no longer any pirates since Pompeius Magnus defeated them in 62 BC, but tempests and shipwrecks were unavoidable. Augustan literature has numerous pieces proving that the Romans were afraid of water and rather nervous when it came to sea voyages. Propertius wrote several poems about shipwrecks, for example the elegies 2, 26 or 3, 7 about his friend Petrus who disappeared in a tempest at sea on his way to Pharos: the poet developed the idea that sailing off means heading for one's death, voyages being evil inventions. In the same way, it is significant that Virgil's *Aeneid* began with the long, colourful description of a tempest. Yet despite these dangers and the logical apprehensions, travel and tourism were very popular in the Augustan society, in two ways. First, they concerned most people and not only an elite. Urry rightly wrote that 'in Imperial Rome a fairly extensive pattern of travel for pleasure and culture existed for the elite' (Urry, 1990: 4), yet if the Augustan Grand Tour was reserved to a minority, a large number of Romans went on holidays in summer. No statistics are available and quantifying this phenomenon is difficult but the phrase 'mass tourism' may not be entirely inappropriate. Second, travel and tourism were very much enjoyed and appreciated and, as such, appear as an important cultural feature of the Augustan society, rather neglected by most authors, if not all.

## **Conclusion: The Modernity of Augustan Tourism**

This chapter has outlined numerous similarities between Augustan tourists and contemporary tourists, from their gaze and motivations to their concern for safety and entertainment. Yet the modernity of Augustan tourism goes beyond that, reaching a structural level in the relationship between Augustan tourism and Augustan society. The Augustan case study shows that tourism provides solid information and evidence on a society's level of sophistication, notably in terms of time management and social organisation. Tourism could grow in Augustan society because its social system was organised in order to make Roman citizens' time as free

as possible, most productive activities (except law and politics) being assigned to slaves, freedmen or colonised peoples. *Otium* became the mission statement of a society of leisure: 'Under the Empire, the Roman population is busy with only two things: eating and having fun', and it is interesting to see that the more *otium*-oriented the Augustan society got, the more it became a society of leisure (where tourism became more developed) (Hacquard, 1952: 156). The modernity of Augustan tourism is reflected in the way in which the development of tourism depends on social structures. In Roman times indeed, tourism reflected society as a whole: the emergence of tourism in the last part of the Republic corresponded to cultural progress (as reflected in literature and the arts in general), the climax of tourism with its numerous forms and its popularity in the Augustan age corresponded to the acme of Latin culture, while 'the decline of the empire was accompanied by the decline of tourism. The wealthy class was greatly reduced, roads deteriorated and the countryside became overrun with bandits, thieves and scoundrels, making travel unsafe' (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1995: 24). Literature abounds on the combined reasons for the Roman decadence and the fall of the empire but it is certain that the overwhelming importance of *otium* and pleasure were significant factors, which is interesting for the present analysis since *otium* and pleasure were the dynamics of Augustan tourism. It would then be interesting to examine if this life-cycle is only typical of the Augustan society or could also be identified, for example, in the brilliant Maya civilisation of the eighth and ninth centuries or in the prosperous era of Edo in Japan (1615–1868). This could be the subject of similar case studies, further testing this model of a dialogical parallel between a society's development and the development of travel and tourism within it.

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