NEWS LESSON

Are We Travelling for the Place or for the Picture?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Does being influenced by an image make a choice less genuine?
2. What does a travel photograph usually leave outside the frame?
3. Who benefits when a place becomes famous online?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**persuasive**	☐	A	put in a certain position
2	**encountered**	☐	B	met or found, often by chance
3	**excludes**	☐	C	good at making you want to do something
4	**decorate**	☐	D	leaves out
5	**outlast**	☐	E	to make something look nicer
6	**concentrate**	☐	F	to continue for longer than something else
7	**rewards**	☐	G	to bring many people or things into one place
8	**arranged**	☐	H	gives something good to

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

An image can start a journey. It can also hand the real place, with its residents and its other visitors, a standard to live up to.

1 First comes the image: a quiet cove, a breakfast table angled towards the sea, a narrow street with nobody in it. Then comes the thought that makes travel so persuasive, which is simply imagine being there. Months later the traveller arrives and finds nine other people waiting to photograph the same doorway. The street is still beautiful. It is just less private than twelve seconds of video suggested.

2 That traveller is invented, but the shape of the experience is widely shared. Social media has given travel inspiration an extraordinary reach. A short clip can introduce someone to a landscape, a neighbourhood or a dish they would otherwise never have encountered, and it can turn an ordinary evening at home into a small act of escape.

3 A feed also teaches us what a place is supposed to look like. It rewards the image understood in a second: the clear water, the empty street, the viewpoint at the exact hour. The coach park, the queue and the twenty minutes outside the café rarely make the cut. This is not deception, since every photograph excludes almost everything. The difficulty begins when the frame quietly becomes the whole of our expectation.

4 For some travellers the photograph is not a distraction from the experience but a genuine part of it. In a survey commissioned by TUI Musement, 39% of travellers in Spain, Italy and the UK said they had visited a tourist site mainly in order to photograph or film it. That is one industry survey reporting what people say about themselves, not proof that nobody looks at anything. It does suggest that the desire for an image can shape an itinerary rather than merely decorate it.

5 The effects reach well beyond the visitor. A single popular post can bring badly needed custom to a restaurant. It can also concentrate several hundred people onto one footbridge at the same hour. Social media is one part of a much larger tourism economy, and the people inside it do not share a single view. The owner of a full café and the neighbour trying to park are having different afternoons on the same street.

6 There is a quieter version of the same tension inside the holiday group. One person wants to photograph the sunset. Another wants to watch it without being arranged in front of it. Neither is wrong. Images make us look harder at things, and they keep days alive long after the details have gone. They can also turn into another task on the list, particularly once the imagined audience starts to matter more than the people actually present.

7 The answer is unlikely to be a ban on phones, or a hunt for somewhere nobody has found, since that hunt is what empties the quiet places. It may be enough to ask what drew you there, and whether you have left room to be surprised. A crowded beach can still be worth the journey. An unplanned conversation can outlast every photograph from the trip. The question worth carrying is whose idea of a good holiday you are following.

Sources: ABTA, Holiday Habits 2026-27 report; TUI Musement, Travel in the age of scrolling. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer is cautious about how much the 39% survey result proves. T F NG
2. The writer thinks the disagreement over the sunset is best settled by deciding which traveller is right. T F NG
3. The writer believes social media will eventually reduce the number of people who travel. T F NG
4. The text suggests that a popular post can be good news for one person and bad news for another on the same street. T F NG
5. The writer recommends searching for an undiscovered place as a way of avoiding crowds. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

backlash	custom	deception	hunt	itinerary	novelty	reach	tension

1. Editing out the crowd is hardly _____ when every viewer knows that a photograph shows only part of a scene.
2. The group's _____ was so packed with famous viewpoints that nobody had a free afternoon.
3. Without the festival, many family restaurants would have struggled to attract enough _____ in winter.
4. There was a noticeable _____ between those who wanted to linger and those who wanted to keep moving.
5. The _____ for an undiscovered village often ends with a crowd arriving in the same lanes.
6. Short videos have an astonishing _____ , travelling far beyond the audience of the person who posted them.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Her _____ on waiting for perfect light tested the whole group's patience. (INSIST)
2. The idea that a place can stay secret for ever is simply _____ once a video has been posted. (REALISTIC)
3. Local shopkeepers have mixed feelings about the sudden _____ of their street. (POPULAR)
4. Viewers tend to _____ how peaceful a place will be when they have only seen it in a photograph. (ESTIMATE)
5. It is _____ to arrive early if you want a clear view of the footbridge. (ADVISE)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At C1, adjectives often take a fixed preposition that is hard to guess: tantamount to, fraught with, contingent on. Treat each pair as one unit.

at by in of on to with

1. Choosing a destination only because it is popular online is tantamount _____ letting a stranger plan your holiday.
2. The journey proved fraught _____ small frustrations, from cancelled trains to a closed viewpoint.
3. Whether a village copes with sudden fame is contingent _____ how far its residents are consulted.
4. A harbour bereft _____ its fishing boats may look tidy in photographs but loses part of its character.
5. The long climb culminated _____ a breathtaking view of the harbour.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. The article says a feed teaches us what a place is supposed to look like. Is that fair?
2. Is looking for an undiscovered place part of the same problem?
3. What would you want to remember from a trip if you took no pictures at all?

9 Role-play: one famous beach or a quiet day

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend with the video

You saw a video of a beautiful beach and you saved it. You want to spend the whole day there and take photos. Explain why it matters to you, and listen to your friend's worries.

Student B · the friend who wants a quiet day

You've heard the beach will be packed. You'd prefer a slow lunch somewhere nobody told you about. Say what worries you, then suggest a plan you can both accept.

Useful phrases

I'd love to see that beach from the video.

It's going to be packed, though.

We don't have to take a hundred photos.

How about half a day there and half somewhere quiet?

That's fair, I'm happy to compromise.

What matters most to you on this trip?

Afterwards, tell the class: where did you decide to go, and how did you share the time?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 C · 2 B · 3 D · 4 E · 5 F · 6 G · 7 H · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 deception · 2 itinerary · 3 custom · 4 tension · 5 hunt · 6 reach

6 Word forms

1 insistence · 2 unrealistic · 3 popularity · 4 overestimate · 5 advisable

7 Language focus

1 to · 2 with · 3 on · 4 of · 5 in

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**