NEWS LESSON

What Happens When the Camera Is Not Welcome?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you want strangers visiting your home because they had seen a video of it?
2. Can a travel video show respect for a place?
3. When does sharing a place online change it?

2 Key words

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

1	**archipelago**	☐	A	done without official permission
2	**unauthorised**	☐	B	the quality of being new and unusual
3	**consistently**	☐	C	entering a place or situation where you are not wanted
4	**scenery**	☐	D	in the same way every time
5	**consent**	☐	E	a group of islands close together
6	**intrusion**	☐	F	the background of a place or story, seen but not really thought about
7	**novelty**	☐	G	permission to do something, freely given
8	**agency**	☐	H	the ability to make your own choices and act on them

3 Read

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

Content creators are chasing exclusive footage of the world's most isolated communities. For campaigners, the real issue is consent, and the risk is serious disease.

1 The objects in Mykhailo Polyakov's boat were almost absurdly ordinary: a camera, a coconut and a can of Diet Coke. The destination was anything but. In March 2025, the American traveller headed for North Sentinel Island, home to an Indigenous community that has consistently rejected outside contact. He landed, attempted to draw attention and departed without encountering residents. Indian authorities subsequently arrested him. The episode raised a question the video could not answer: what right did an outsider have to arrive when the people living there had refused contact?

2 The Sentinelese inhabit a forested island in the Andaman archipelago, where legal restrictions are intended to prevent unauthorised visits. Those protections are not merely symbolic. Communities with little exposure to outside populations may be exceptionally vulnerable to infectious diseases, while past encounters with outsiders have demonstrated the potential for violence and exploitation. The fact that Polyakov apparently failed to meet anyone does not cancel out the risk created by his arrival; what matters is the contact that might have occurred, not merely the contact that did.

3 His expedition reflects a broader problem in the attention economy. The more elusive a place or community appears, the greater its potential value as online content. Creators increasingly zero in on the most isolated communities for exactly that reason. Images presented as unprecedented can draw in enormous audiences, converting novelty into advertising income and a public profile. In that calculation, Indigenous people risk becoming scenery in somebody else's account of adventure. What might be described as exploration from the visitor's perspective can look very different to those whose boundaries have been ignored.

4 Survival International estimates that 196 uncontacted groups remain worldwide, many in regions threatened by logging, mining or land encroachment. The label "uncontacted" should not be mistaken for ignorance or a lack of agency. Avoiding outsiders can be a deliberate response to historical experience, including disease, violence and dispossession. To present isolation as a mystery waiting to be solved is to deny communities the capacity to decide their own future, and to treat their refusal as an obstacle rather than an answer.

5 The distinction between consent and intrusion is essential. Indigenous groups that invite journalists or researchers can negotiate conditions, control access and decide how they are represented. Others choose to use digital media themselves to make political claims and document threats to their territory. Those partnerships differ fundamentally from an unsolicited approach to a population that has repeatedly rejected visitors. Public interest cannot be established merely by the fact that an image would attract attention.

6 The ethical challenge extends beyond one traveller. Satellite imagery, drones and affordable cameras have made remote places increasingly visible, tempting outsiders to equate technical access with moral permission. It is possible to learn about Indigenous rights, protect land and challenge environmental destruction without attempting direct contact with people who refuse it. The most responsible documentary decision may be one that produces no extraordinary footage at all. Curiosity is valuable, but only when it recognises that other people's right to be left alone is not ours to trade for a few million views.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

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

1. The writer suggests that an unsuccessful landing could still have been harmful. T F NG
2. The writer thinks groups that avoid outsiders probably do so because they know nothing about the wider world. T F NG
3. Polyakov had arranged to sell his recordings. T F NG
4. The writer distinguishes between groups that invite journalists and groups approached without an invitation. T F NG
5. The writer thinks easy technical access to remote places makes visiting them more acceptable. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

converting	document	equate	exceed	inhabit	negotiate	reflecting	tempting

1. It is a mistake to _____ popularity with quality, since the most-watched programmes are not always the best.
2. The two sides sat down to _____ over pay, but neither would move.
3. Only a few hundred people _____ the remote valley, and most of them are farmers.
4. Photographers have worked for decades to _____ the effects of deforestation on rural families.
5. Clever marketing is good at _____ a passing curiosity into a long-term habit.
6. The low price kept _____ shoppers into buying things they did not need.

6 Word forms

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

1. Wildlife officers described the sudden loss of habitat as an _____ crisis. (PRECEDENT)
2. The rare bird is notoriously _____ , and few photographers have ever captured it. (ELUDE)
3. Campaigners say the _____ of cheap labour in the industry must stop. (EXPLOIT)
4. Farmers complained about the steady _____ of building on protected farmland. (ENCROACH)
5. Entire families suffered _____ when the government seized the land. (DISPOSSESS)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some formal adjectives and nouns take one fixed preposition. Learn the whole phrase, such as 'contingent on', not the adjective alone.

at	for	in	of	on	to	with

1. Entering the territory of a community that has refused contact is tantamount _____ ignoring its right to decide.
2. Any approach to isolated groups is fraught _____ danger for the people who live there.
3. The success of such a project is contingent _____ the community's genuine consent.
4. The creators filmed the village in defiance _____ the explicit wishes of its elders.
5. Viewers who share such videos may become complicit _____ the damage.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

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

1. Who should decide whether a small community welcomes visitors?
2. Does asking one person's permission make it fair to film everyone?
3. What should a creator leave out even if it would get more views?

9 Role-play: should we share this video?

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

Student A · the friend who found the video

You found a video online of a visit to a remote community that does not want visitors. You think it is interesting and want to share it. Explain why, and listen to your friend's worries.

Student B · the friend who is not sure

You think the video may not be respectful. Ask where it came from and who agreed to it. Say what you would prefer to share instead. Try to agree on a decision.

Useful phrases

I'm not sure we should share this.

I can see why it's interesting, but they didn't ask to be filmed.

What if the community doesn't want to be seen?

I'd rather check the source first.

We could share an article about their rights instead.

Let's agree to disagree.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you share the video, and what was your main reason?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 equate · 2 negotiate · 3 inhabit · 4 document · 5 converting · 6 tempting

6 Word forms

1 unprecedented · 2 elusive · 3 exploitation · 4 encroachment · 5 dispossession

7 Language focus

1 to · 2 with · 3 on · 4 of · 5 in

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