

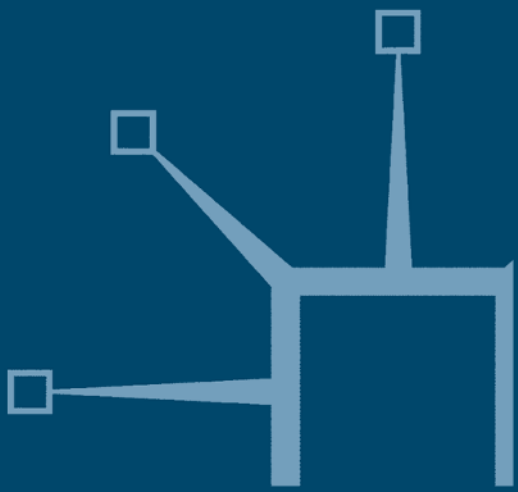
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# Seeing Hitler's Germany

Tourism in the Third Reich

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Kristin Semmens



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*For Derek Little*

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# Preface

Since violence and terror continue to dominate studies of the Third Reich, I have often been called upon to justify the topic of this book, both academically and in casual conversation. Colleagues and friends have wanted to know what leisure travel has to do with racial persecution, concentration camps and genocide. How can a practice based on the search for relaxation and pleasure shed light on some of the most horrifying events of the twentieth century? In response, I have suggested that not every book about the Third Reich can or must tell us something about the Holocaust *per se*. It should none the less tell us something about Hitler's Germany. Tourism in particular illuminates how the Nazi system functioned in pursuing its overall goals. The combination of compulsion and conciliation, coercion and compromise that the regime employed within the tourist sector has wider significance for our understanding of the Third Reich. Nazi interventions here served several overlapping objectives. In the short term, revival of the tourist industry would contribute to economic recovery. In the longer term, tourism would help cement the foundations of the 'national community', secure international consent for Nazi foreign policy and prepare the German Volk for future wartime mobilization.

*Seeing Hitler's Germany* is the first comprehensive study of commercial tourism under the swastika. It demonstrates how effectively the Nazi regime controlled and coordinated all German tourism organizations. It emphasizes, on the one hand, the 'normality' of many everyday tourist experiences after 1933, experiences which certainly helped some Germans and many foreign visitors to overlook the regime's brutality. It aims, on the other hand, to show how tourism also celebrated the most racist, chauvinist aspects of the 'new Germany', that these were integrated into a Nazified tourist culture, and that they too became a familiar part of tourism under Hitler. By investigating a cross-section of 'normal' tourist experiences – taking a tour, visiting a popular sightseeing attraction, reading a guidebook or sending a postcard – the book deepens our understanding of the stability and popular legitimacy of Hitler's rule.

The following chapters draw upon a wide variety of sources. These range from the documentary records of various tourism organizations in Berlin, Weimar, Bavaria and the Black Forest, to brochures, prospectuses, advertisements, guidebooks, postcards, posters, maps and

souvenirs from across Germany. I scoured journals like *Der Fremdenverkehr* (*Tourism*) and *Das Reisebüro* (*The Travel Agency*) along with travel articles in several daily newspapers and popular national magazines. Where possible, I have tried to let the tourists' own voices be heard by referring to published memoirs, travel accounts, photograph albums, postcard greetings and guestbook entries.

Naturally, I did not accumulate this disparate material and bring it together into a coherent narrative all on my own. It is my great pleasure to acknowledge here the guidance and assistance I received from numerous individuals and institutions as I completed this book, which began its life as a PhD thesis written at the University of Cambridge. At Cambridge, my doctoral supervisor, Richard J. Evans, forced me to think about the 'big questions' and, more importantly, helped me to tackle them. Many friends read chapters of the thesis and offered shrewd suggestions for improvement, including Cam Grey, Bernhard Fulda, Charlotte Henze, Jessica McGraw, Jan Rüger, Werner Trapp, Dan Vyleta, Nikolaus Wachsmann and Andrew Webster. Candice Caldwell, Erin Mitchell, Riccarda Torriani, Anneke de Rudder, Ann Vernon, Liz Vlossack and Emma Winter offered their support as well. Christopher Clark and Sir Ian Kershaw, my thesis examiners, not only made the defence a surprisingly pleasant experience, but also gave concrete, insightful recommendations for turning the thesis into a book.

Countless archivists and librarians helped me to research this project and I am grateful to them all, but several deserve special mention: Ulrich Ecker at the Stadtarchiv Freiburg, Heinrich Graf at the Kreisarchiv Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Frau Huber and Maria Stehr at the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Carmen Lorenz at the Bundesarchiv-Lichterfelde, Eva Rothkirch and Herr Fiebig at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, David Smith at the New York Public Library, Monika Summer at the Landesarchiv Berlin, Hasso Spode at the Historisches Archiv zum Tourismus in Berlin and Martin Walter at the Kreisarchiv Rastatt. While in Germany, the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar and the library at the University of Freiburg ordered innumerable interlibrary loans for me, which aided the research process immeasurably. Finally, I could not have completed the book without Corey Campion, my research assistant at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

The thesis itself was made possible through the generous financial support of the Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, the German Historical Institute, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), St. John's College and the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission. I was also honoured to receive the London German Historical Institute's Annual Thesis Prize

and the Fraenkel Prize in Contemporary History in 2003. I completed the book manuscript thanks to a post-doctoral research fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada held at the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria.

Turning a thesis into a book was a less straightforward, more arduous operation than I had first naively assumed. I am indebted to many for the help I received during this process. William Mulligan and Gavriel Rosenfeld shared their tips on writing proposals. Shelley Baranowski, Christopher R. Friedrichs and Jeremy Noakes not only conveyed their enthusiasm for the project, but also gave extensive critiques and commentary on the entire manuscript. Thomas J. Saunders at the University of Victoria was incredibly obliging. He offered his thoughts on various drafts and patient encouragement right until the last minute. My sister, Jessica Larouche, proofread chapter after chapter, while Kevin Ford patiently scanned the figures. I would also like to extend my thanks to the staff at Palgrave Macmillan, including my editor, Luciana O'Flaherty, and Daniel Bunyard. To Melanie Buddle, Lisa Cohen-Wallis, Karen Fishwick, Tamara Ford, Sarah Hentschel, Jean McPherson, Meredith Parkes, Gillian Robertson and Barb Stacey, thank you for telling me it could be done.

My mother, Monika Semmens, my four grandparents, Peter and Katherine Kalinge and Edmund and Adelaide Semmens, and my in-laws, the Little and Davies families, encouraged me constantly, even when it meant listening to endless talk about Nazi Germany. My father, Ted Semmens, read every word and gave his useful comments from a perspective very different from my own. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Derek Little, who helped me reach the publishing deadline as another, even more important due date loomed. For this, and for so much more, I dedicate the book to him.

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# Abbreviations

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Amt RWU | Amt Reisen, Wandern und Urlaub (Office for Travel, Hiking and Vacations)                              |
| BAB     | Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (German Federal Archives, Berlin-Lichterfelde)                       |
| BayHStA | Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (Main State Archive of Bavaria)                                 |
| BDVB    | Bund Deutscher Verkehrsverbände und Bäder (League of German Tourism Associations and Bathing Resorts) |
| DAF     | Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labour Front)   |
| GSA     | Goethe und Schiller Archiv, Weimar (Goethe and Schiller Archive)                                      |
| HAT     | Historisches Archiv zum Tourismus, Berlin (Historical Archive for Tourism, Berlin)                    |
| KdF     | Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy)   |
| KLV     | Kinderlandverschickung (children's transports to the countryside)                                     |
| LFV     | Landesfremdenverkehrsverband (State Tourism Association)  |
| LVV     | Landesverkehrsverband (State Tourism Association)   |
| MER     | Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro (Central European Travel Agency)   |
| NA      | National Archives, Washington, DC   |
| NSDAP   | Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Nazi Party)   |
| RDV     | Reichsbahnzentrale für den deutschen Reiseverkehr (German Railroads Information Office)               |
| RFF     | Reichsausschuß für Fremdenverkehr (Reich Committee for Tourism)                                       |
| RFV     | Reichsfremdenverkehrsverband (Reich Tourism Association)  |
| RHV     | Reichsverkehrsgruppe Hilfsgewerbe des Verkehrs (Reich Group for the Auxiliary Travel Industry)        |
| SA      | Sturmabteilung (Storm Troop)  |
| Sopade  | Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands im Exil (Social Democratic Party of Germany in Exile)         |
| SS      | Schutzstaffel (Protection Squad)  |
| StAB    | Stadtarchiv Breisach (Breisach City Archive)  |
| StAB-B  | Stadtarchiv Baden-Baden (Baden-Baden City Archive)  |
| StAB-S  | Stadtarchiv Bad Säckingen (Bad Säckingen City Archive)  |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| StaF    | Stadtarchiv Freiburg (Freiburg City Archive)   |
| StAF    | Staatsarchiv Freiburg (Freiburg State Archive)   |
| StaG    | Stadtarchiv Gernsbach (Gernsbach City Archive)   |
| StaK    | Stadtarchiv Karlsruhe (Karlsruhe City Archive)   |
| StaO    | Stadtarchiv Offenburg (Offenburg City Archive)   |
| StaS    | Stadtarchiv Schramberg (Schramberg City Archive)   |
| StaT-N  | Stadtarchiv Titisee-Neustadt (Titisee-Neustadt City Archive)   |
| StaW    | Stadtarchiv Weimar (Weimar City Archive)   |
| StaW-T  | Stadtarchiv Waldshut-Tiengen (Waldshut-Tiengen City Archive)   |
| StIB    | Stadtgeschichtliches Institut Bühl (Bühl Institute of City History)  |
| ThHStAW | Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar (Main State Archive of Thuringia, Weimar)                                     |
| WGB     | Wirtschaftsgruppe Gaststätten- und Beherbergungsgewerbe (Economic Group for the Catering and Accommodation Industry) |

# 1

## Introduction

On 23 June 1933, Adolf Hitler signed a law creating a new organization in Germany, the Reich Committee for Tourism. It came at a time of violent repression and political upheaval. In the preceding months, the concentration camp at Dachau had been established and a secret police force, the Gestapo, had been formed. Books by Jewish and other so-called 'degenerate' authors had been burned, a sterilization law had been passed and the trade unions no longer existed. The civil service and judiciary were being purged of 'non-Aryans', while left-wing political parties were viciously suppressed. Only two days earlier, during the 'Week of Blood' in the Berlin suburb of Köpenick, 3,000 Social Democrats had been arrested, and tortured or murdered. In the midst of these atrocities, the Reich Tourism Committee law was passed. It marked the first step in the Nazis' thorough *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) of German commercial tourism. Already adept at wielding intimidation and brutality as weapons in the battle to achieve its goals, the regime now added pleasure travel to its arsenal.

Tourism remains a relatively unexplored topic for historians of Nazi Germany. In many ways, this neglect is understandable. Tourism is overshadowed by persecution, terror and genocide, the defining hallmarks of the Nazi regime. In the context of a murderous dictatorship, tourism might indeed seem a 'soft topic', one that threatens to ignore more fundamental historical problems.<sup>1</sup> Yet this assessment is misguided. As many historians have come to acknowledge, what once appeared inconsequential or even trivial can actually reveal a great deal about the past. Moreover, if historians have considered tourism to be a soft topic, the Nazi regime certainly did not. It saw tourism as an important branch of the German economy, which demanded support and regulation by the state. Tourism also offered a means to advance the regime's



political agenda. Domestically, it would assist the creation and unification of a racially purified, unswervingly loyal and deeply patriotic 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Internationally, it would calm fears about the Nazis' intentions on the world stage. Most importantly, tourist practices under the swastika would serve as 'rituals of reassurance', helping to convince both German citizens and visitors from abroad of the continued normality of everyday life in the Third Reich.<sup>2</sup>

This book marks the first broad foray into the world of commercial tourism under Hitler. It considers tourism primarily, though not exclusively, as an activity carried out while on vacation or during one's leisure time. Tourism involves some sort of voluntary passage across distinct boundaries, which requires moving from one's usual place of residence. Tourism thus encompasses the web of relationships and experiences created when people travel for recreational purposes, the goods and services they consume and the industry designed to meet their needs.<sup>3</sup> On one level, *Seeing Hitler's Germany* provides a reconstruction of that web, thereby enriching what is to date a relatively meagre historiography. On another, it employs tourism as a prism through which to view and shed new light on larger issues in Third Reich history. These include the regime's politicization of cultural practices, its impact on daily life, the nature of its authority and legitimacy, and the role of popular demand. An examination of tourism also exposes the significance of mass consumption and consumer culture in the Third Reich.

## **The turn to tourism**

Unlike economists, ecologists, anthropologists, sociologists, semioticians and geographers, historians have only recently turned to tourism. Despite their attention to the 'golden age' of travel in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they have been reluctant to welcome tourism, its supposedly eviscerated modern-day counterpart, into the 'charmed circle of acceptable themes in European history'.<sup>4</sup> In part, the enduring image of modern tourists themselves – noses buried in their guidebooks, rushing from sight to sight *en masse*, never veering from the beaten track in search of superficial pleasures and 'pseudo-events' – has prevented historians, with some notable exceptions, from taking tourism seriously.<sup>5</sup> If the field of tourism history as a whole remains patchy, German tourism histories are even more fragmented. There are many good regional tourism studies, as well as works on the travel agency and German travel writing, but the lack of carefully

researched, genuinely academic syntheses is keenly felt.<sup>6</sup> More problematic than the number of works on offer is the limited nature of their interpretive frameworks. Too often they provide an analysis that is isolated from wider themes in tourism history and, more significantly, from larger historical themes. As interest in the topic grows, however, this situation has begun to change. Historians of German tourism have now begun to explore the broader implications of their subject. This has been especially true within the context of the twentieth century, where an analysis of leisure travel has been used to provide new perspectives on its most significant developments, such as the growth of nationalism and mass political mobilization.<sup>7</sup>

The touristic turn in Third Reich historiography was clearly hindered by the enduring dissonance between holidays and horror, vacations and violence, tourism and terror. However, several longer-term research trajectories within the field itself have led in a similar direction, towards an embrace of tourism as a serious historical topic. The emergence of history 'from below', of the everyday lives of ordinary men and women, proved instrumental here.<sup>8</sup> Much *Alltagsgeschichte* of the 1970s and early 1980s tended to concentrate on those aspects of life under Hitler that literally occurred *every* day: school, work and family life. More recent literature has broadened the spectrum of the 'emotional linchpins of fascist everyday life' beyond the workplace and the family home.<sup>9</sup> While the tourist experience is sometimes conceived in opposition to this realm of the everyday, however widely defined, in reality, it was shaped by the same societal structures, mentalities and identities that influenced daily life. Travellers clearly do not leave their interpretive frameworks behind when they embark on a journey: they pack them up and carry them along.<sup>10</sup> Viewed from this perspective, tourism fits well within an everyday approach to the Nazi past. It was one component of 'normal' life under Hitler, but also a means whereby a sense of normality was sustained, which in turn guaranteed enduring public support for the regime. When related to the broader patterns of personal and social experience, tourism thus offers fresh insight into the nexus linking everyday life and the popular legitimacy of the Nazi dictatorship.

On the one hand, the Nazis pledged to restore stability and normality. On the other, they promised the spectacular and the extraordinary. Historical interest in these 'attractions of fascism' – what made fascism fascinating – continues to grow.<sup>11</sup> A variety of platforms for the ornamentation, decoration, celebration and staging of Nazi ideas have been explored: mass rallies, festivals, the cinema, radio, the Olympic

Games, exhibitions, advertising and the KdF holidays.<sup>12</sup> All were important elements in the Nazis' oft-touted aestheticization of politics. As this book reveals, commercial tourism too became an apposite vehicle for this process.

Increased curiosity about Nazi consumer culture generally has sparked further investigations of leisure travel.<sup>13</sup> Although tensions between guns and butter were never entirely diffused, the Nazi regime managed the problem of consumption in such a way as to ensure its own stability. The purchase of pleasure was an important part of the solution. Tourism provided a safe form of consumption that did not compromise the rearmament campaign, because its primary commodities were places, sights and experiences. Moreover, tourism contributed to the feeling that material conditions had improved since 1933; after the outbreak of war, it compensated for the increasing scarcity of many other consumer goods.<sup>14</sup>

To date, the Strength through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*, or KdF) holidays, the state-sponsored excursions intended primarily for the nation's workers, have dominated accounts of tourism in the Third Reich.<sup>15</sup> Yet at its height, KdF tourism accounted for only 10.2 per cent of the total number of overnight stays by Germans in Germany and an even lower fraction of overnight stays altogether.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that commercial tourism outweighed KdF travel in terms of both statistical and economic significance, little attention has been paid to its organizational structure or its cultural contours. The KdF holidays are still essential to understanding tourism in the Nazi period. For this reason, even a study devoted primarily to commercial leisure travel such as this cannot ignore them. However, by placing them within a wider touristic context, one often overlooked till now, we gain a new perspective on them.

This book owes much to two recent studies examining various aspects of German commercial tourism between the 1900s and the 1950s: Rudy Koshar's *German Travel Cultures* and Christine Keitz's *Reisen als Leitbild*.<sup>17</sup> In part because of their chosen focus, and because the Third Reich represents but a single chapter in their stories, these works offer only brief references to the Nazis' far-going coordination of the tourism industry. Both tend to de-emphasize the radical transformation in the meaning the state ascribed to leisure travel after 1933. Such conclusions are in keeping with their larger arguments about touristic continuity in the first half of the twentieth century. They stress long-term trends and downplay how the Nazi regime fostered these same continuities in order to instrumentalize them. While politics 'left its footprint' on tourism, Koshar maintains, it was often 'indistinct'.<sup>18</sup> In

contrast, this book offers some different conclusions about the shape, depth and clarity of the jackboot's imprint upon German tourism. To reach them, we must first recount the beginnings of modern tourism in Germany.

### **Tourism in Germany: a brief history**

Human beings have always been travellers, whether as nomads, pilgrims, explorers, crusaders, soldiers or tradesmen. In Germany, travel for medicinal or therapeutic purposes also has a long history. Visits to spas and seaside resorts, where one 'took the waters' to cure specific illnesses, were a well-established tradition by the end of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the Grand Tour, an essential precursor to modern pleasure travel, was reaching its apogee. On tour, young European, mostly male aristocrats, trod a well-worn path through Italy, Greece, Switzerland and the Rhineland for up to three years. Ostensibly in pursuit of knowledge and the expansion of intellectual horizons, these early Tour-ists were motivated in large part by social convention. Over the course of time, though, pleasure and entertainment joined education and cultural improvement as incentives for travel. The German *Bildungsreise* (educational trip) of the nineteenth century shared the destinations and objectives of the elitist Grand Tour, but its participants now included members of the middle classes, which marked a significant development in the history of leisure travel. The process of democratization had begun, but it would take a transportation revolution to hasten its pace.

The advent of rail travel marked the true beginnings of modern tourism in Europe. The first German rail connection between Nuremberg and Fürth opened in 1835. A rapid expansion of the network followed until, on the eve of the First World War, no German town lay further than one hour's walk from the nearest train station. This new mode of transportation guaranteed the participation of wider segments of society. It also launched a specifically German form of holiday travel in the form of sojourns to *Sommerfrischen* (summer vacation resorts). Located amidst the mountains and woods of Bavaria, the Harz and Thuringia, the *Sommerfrischen* provided relaxation for bourgeois families eager to escape the cities and take pleasure in the nation's natural beauty. The aristocratic classes still predominated amongst visitors to spas and seaside resorts, but thanks to the railway, the middle classes were now able to frequent less exclusive, less expensive and more easily accessible vacation destinations. Moreover, with the train, travel had not only

become safer, more reliable and cheaper, it had also become an end in itself. Modern tourism was born and a new malaise soon diagnosed: travel fever.<sup>19</sup>

An entire industry evolved to facilitate and promote leisure travel, and to standardize and regulate it. Tourism societies, established for the first time in Germany during the nineteenth century, were critical to the evolution of a touristic infrastructure. The tourist guidebook and the travel agency merit special attention in this narrative as well. An English firm, Murray, is generally credited with having published the first modern travel handbook in 1836, which determined what 'ought to be seen' while on holiday in Europe. Two years later, Karl Baedeker issued his first guide to the Rhineland. Soon Baedeker became a German synonym for guidebook.<sup>20</sup> England led the way again in opening the first modern travel agency and organizing the first package tours. Established in 1841, Cook's Tours introduced all-inclusive group excursions abroad in 1855. Germany's first commercial travel agencies did not open their doors for another decade, but once in business, their clientele continued to grow.<sup>21</sup> By the turn of the century, tourism had become an important branch of many local economies. Tourist literature also firmly established the country's 'main points of interest' – all 148 of them according to a 1913 Baedeker guide – for both domestic and international tourists.<sup>22</sup> These visitors toured Germany's monuments, art galleries and museums; they sought out natural sites like the Rhine and the Harz mountains; they recovered at the best-known thermal baths. While tourism remained largely a middle- and upper-class phenomenon, it had none the less become an inescapable practice of modern life.

The Great War interrupted this narrative of progress. When it broke out, visitors departed their holiday resorts *en masse*. Rationing, wartime inflation and travel restrictions had a catastrophic effect on German tourism as a whole. However, individual places, like some spa towns in Bavaria, were less afflicted. In fact, many benefited from the growing number of sick and wounded soldiers seeking a cure while on leave.<sup>23</sup> For these destinations it was not the war years but the Weimar years that were later remembered as the real time of crisis.

### **Tourism in crisis: the Weimar years**

When the Great War finally ended, Germany was in turmoil. Suffering from staggering losses on the battlefield, and the effects of food shortages and the influenza pandemic at home, the country now faced an

uncertain future. Kaiser Wilhelm II had abdicated and the Weimar Republic had been proclaimed. Paramilitary organizations controlled the streets; violent clashes between Communists and right-wing nationalists were common. Yet, an American soldier and self-proclaimed vagabond touring the 'Hungry Empire' observed that 'Baedeker himself never aspired to see his land so crowded with tourists and sightseers as it was in the spring of 1919'.<sup>24</sup> Taking advantage of their own relatively strong currencies, demobilized soldiers and commercial tourists alike flocked to the country. They discovered that hotel rooms, train passes, theatre tickets and restaurant meals were astoundingly cheap. 'For the first time I had something of the sensation of being a millionaire,' the same American soldier recalled.<sup>25</sup> The German urban centres, small towns and vacation resorts upon which these foreign visitors descended had vastly different 'touristic biographies' and offered up various attractions.<sup>26</sup> Berlin had erected its first municipal tourism society during the war. Attempts to revive it went hand-in-hand with efforts to obscure the capital's imperial past. Statues of the deposed Kaiser, once included on the tourist itinerary, were removed and street names were changed. Berlin's cabarets, gay clubs and illicit nightlife titillated some tourists, but others thought the revolution-scarred metropolis was both 'sinister' and 'immoral'. In contrast, political upheaval in Munich did little to dampen visitors' delight. Foreigners admired the city as much for its 'aggressively good-natured' citizens as for its beer. The town of Weimar, once venerated as the home of Goethe and Schiller, now played upon its connection to the Republic that bore its name.<sup>27</sup> Weimar flaunted how much had changed since 1918, but the war had done nothing, one American visitor happily noted, to obliterate the 'romance, charm and picturesqueness' of the Black Forest. Like the alpine fairyland of upper Bavaria, it was still enchanting.<sup>28</sup> Soon after hostilities ceased, spa guests returned to opulent resorts like Baden-Baden, which had welcomed them since Roman times; other towns greeted tourists for the first time. By 1922, several German cities recorded visitor numbers that matched or even surpassed those of the last pre-war years.

But all was not well in the German tourism industry. By 1923, with inflationary conditions encouraging even more travel from abroad, complaints increased about this 'plague of foreigners', who were deeply resented for being able to afford what Germans themselves could not. Foreign tourists faced expressions of open hostility from locals and also had to pay surcharges on hotel rooms, ranging from 20 to 200 per cent, and ridiculously high visa fees.<sup>29</sup> Guests from abroad were not the only

ones to experience discriminatory treatment in the Weimar Republic. *Bäder-Antisemitismus* – a kind of ‘vacation anti-Semitism’ – marred the holidays of some Jewish Germans as it had before the Great War. In several seaside resorts, Jews were refused service. They saw anti-Semitic postcards for sale in souvenir shops and heard orchestras play anti-Semitic songs. More rarely, they became the targets of violent attacks.<sup>30</sup> Like foreigners, however, Jewish guests were absolutely central to the recovery of the German tourism industry. Most hotel owners and other tourism operators therefore stressed that all visitors were welcome, regardless of nationality or ethnicity.

Yet nothing could make up for the drastic reduction in domestic tourism as a whole that occurred after the war. When skyrocketing inflation hit in 1923, it decimated the ranks of Germany's affluent travellers; it also reduced incomes for tourism societies and associations, since membership fees could no longer be paid. The ‘miseries of German tourism’ thus became a common refrain in the early years of the Weimar Republic.<sup>31</sup> The stabilization of the economy in the late 1920s brought some relief. By 1929, some destinations were recording increases of more than 150 per cent in comparison to the pre-war years.<sup>32</sup> These figures were buoyed in large part by increased domestic tourism. A variety of socialist organizations and trade union associations had begun to offer inexpensive trips to working-class participants. Tourist clubs, such as the Friends of Nature, arranged similarly low-priced hiking tours and excursions.<sup>33</sup> Commercial travel agencies too lowered their rates on group and package tours to attract new customers. While still predominantly an activity for the wealthy middle classes, tourism now encompassed more Germans from ever-wider segments of society than before.

However, even in this period of relative stability, the tourism industry continued to speak of a crisis. More and more hotels went out of business. Independent travel agencies bemoaned the increasing competition from agencies run by department stores, newspaper publishers and banks. As the tertiary sector expanded, the number of ‘wild’ (i.e. ‘unqualified’) travel agencies also became a cause for grave concern.<sup>34</sup> After the economic crash of 1929, the crisis deepened. Between 1928 and 1933, domestic tourist travel decreased by 40 per cent and the number of international visitors was also substantially reduced. While 66.9 per cent of the beds available for tourists were filled in 1928, only 35.2 per cent were occupied in 1932.<sup>35</sup> Travel agencies lowered the prices of their all-inclusive holidays even further. None the less, like many other businesses dependent upon tourism, many were forced to

close their doors. The political demonstrations and sporadic violence of the time also adversely affected the tourist trade, particularly in those destinations most frequented by foreigners. Hoteliers in the well-known spa towns of the Black Forest and Upper Bavaria complained that marches by NSDAP members, the rowdy behaviour of Nazi stormtroopers and anti-Semitic agitation were driving guests away.<sup>36</sup>

Nazi propaganda later linked Germany's tourism crisis to the dire economic situation. However, it also laid the blame on non-economic factors emblematic of the '*Systemzeit*' (system time), which it claimed had exacerbated conditions and hindered the industry's recovery. These included the lack of an effective, centralized governmental authority on the one hand and, on the other, a surfeit of local, regional, state and national tourism organizations, which both overlapped and competed for jurisdiction. As a result, the Nazis maintained, tourism in the Weimar Republic was marred by constant internal conflict. There had been no unified cooperation towards a common goal. 'In the interim Reich', the Nazi Minister for Transportation suggested in 1936, 'German tourism offered an image of hopeless inner conflict and splintering', of an industry riven by 'nerve-wracking ... disagreements'. Therefore, he continued, those within the industry had greeted the National Socialist takeover of tourism with enthusiasm.<sup>37</sup>

A brief history of Germany's most important tourism organizations highlights the problems to which the Nazis offered a solution in 1933. Civic beautification societies, the forerunners of future tourism societies, first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. These groups campaigned for specific improvements to their cities and towns, such as paved streets and electric lights. They recognized that the resulting enhancement of appearance, comfort and security could be used to attract future visitors. Towards the end of the century, societies like the Weimar Society for the Promotion of Tourism (1893) were founded. These were explicitly geared to the promotion of tourism at a local level. By 1900, there were approximately 200 of these tourism and beautification societies (*Verkehrs- und Verschönerungsvereine*) in the country.<sup>38</sup> A number of state tourism associations were also formed: Baden established one in 1906, Württemberg-Hohenzollern followed in 1908 and the Thuringia Tourism Association appeared in 1911. These represented the interests of the local and regional tourism societies and worked to promote the entire state as a tourist destination.

The sheer number of different societies, associations and groups meant to manage and promote German tourism in the Weimar Republic was remarkable. Even at the local level, a number of bodies



competed for jurisdiction. In the Black Forest town of Titisee, for example, the Spa Society, Spa Authority and the Society of Interested Parties in Titisee all sought some influence over tourism issues. Relationships between these organizations were often truly fraught. Freiburg's Municipal Tourism Office and its Tourism Society carried on 'like enemies' according to the local press.<sup>39</sup> It was also not uncommon for a single town to belong to three, four or even more of the numerous geographically defined, yet frequently overlapping, regional tourism associations.<sup>40</sup>

As the Nazis later correctly claimed, some of the most persistent and potentially detrimental rivalries occurred at the very top. The nationalization of tourism interests had begun in 1892 with the first meeting of the General Association of German Bathing Resorts, which aimed to represent the interests of spa towns and health resorts throughout Germany. In 1902, the League of German Tourism Societies (later the League of German Tourism Associations) was established in Leipzig. In 1920, the German *Reichsbahn* set up its own German Railroads Information Office (RDV), which focused on promoting Germany abroad. The League regularly clashed with the RDV, and after 1921, with the newly formed Working Group of German Tourism Associations. To complicate matters further, a number of other groups vied with the League to represent the interests of tourism at the national level, including a Reich Committee for Tourism Advertising Abroad, a Reich Working Group for German Tourism Promotion and by 1929, a Central Committee for Tourism located within the Ministry of Transportation. Germany's national travel agency organizations also overlapped and competed.<sup>41</sup>

It is difficult to trace the origins, activities and influence of these various tourism groups. They changed names, shared members and even belonged to one another. The story is confusing and complicated because the pre-1933 situation *was* confusing and complicated. In 1933, however, the Nazis offered an alternative: the simplification of German tourism via the process of *Gleichschaltung*. It is hardly surprising that many tourism professionals welcomed their efforts. There was a concrete desire to replace the fragmented, messy system of tourism organization with a centralized network working together to improve the industry. But it was not only the simplification of the industry that tourism professionals desired. Many also supported the very modern idea that the state, rather than private enterprise, should play the leading role in developing the tourist economy, an idea that travel professionals in other countries shared. The state had a 'moral duty' to get

involved, they believed, since touristic cooperation would be achieved only when commanded from above.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, not all German tourism officials agreed. Some resented instances when the 'public hand' of government interfered in the 'private economic life' of German tourism.<sup>43</sup> In general, however, much affinity existed between the goals of tourism professionals in the Weimar Republic and those of the Nazi regime itself once in power: both sought an end to internal conflict, duplicate organizations and ineffective, legally powerless national leadership.

### The Nazi meaning of tourism

Tourism has always been susceptible to political instrumentalization, even though it is an activity based on the search for relaxation, pleasure and entertainment. Tourism has been used, for example, to cultivate nationalist sentiment amongst Germans in the Habsburg Empire, to uphold the legitimacy of Ferdinand Marcos's 'New Society' in the Philippines and to highlight Palestinian suffering in Israeli-occupied Hebron.<sup>44</sup> In interwar Europe, fascist and communist regimes alike viewed tourism as a means to advance their respective ideological agendas. The national organization of leisure became a priority and the problem of pleasure was taken very seriously indeed. In Nazi Germany, pleasure travel soon joined the list of things allegedly revolutionized by National Socialism. But why exactly was tourism important to the Nazis? What political role was it expected to play?

There is little concrete evidence to support the assertion, made after 1933, that the Nazis frequently emphasized the 'high political meaning' of tourism *before* their assumption of power.<sup>45</sup> However, claims that Nazi propaganda was oblivious to tourism before 1933 are equally misleading.<sup>46</sup> During the Weimar years, Nazi newspapers regularly included advertisements for guesthouses and restaurants, alongside reviews of recently published travel guidebooks. Laments about the state of the industry and bitter attacks on politicians who spent their holidays abroad were also not uncommon in the Nazi press.<sup>47</sup> Such pieces tacitly acknowledged the economic significance of tourism: they alluded to its ability to improve the balance of payments and stimulate the German economy as a whole.

The Nazis had thus already recognized the financial benefits of a healthy tourism industry before 1933, but with Hitler's assumption of power, a more ideologically inflected kind of tourism propaganda began to appear. The articles in the daily press, industry newsletters and trade journals certainly did not neglect tourism's economic side. They

often sketched the fiscal advantages of increased tourism from abroad and an upsurge in domestic holiday travel. However, as was regularly asserted, economic matters did *'not stand at the forefront'* in the Nazi regime's evaluation of the meaning of tourism.<sup>48</sup> Tourism's real value was political. Physical rejuvenation and the restoration of the capability to work strengthened the German people for coming struggles. Accordingly, KdF holidays and commercial vacations played a part in mobilizing the nation for war. Within the field of foreign policy, international tourism had a special role: to convey the 'truth' about Germany to guests from abroad. Through tourism, Nazi Germany would persuade the international community of its peaceful intentions.<sup>49</sup> Since the vast majority of travellers within the German Reich were German, however, tourism propaganda concentrated primarily on the significance of domestic tourism. When steered correctly, the propagandists asserted, leisure travel at home led to an increase in nationalist sentiment and greater unity within the 'national community'. Firsthand encounters with the 'German lands' deepened 'the love and understanding of the German people for the landscape, the history and the culture of their Fatherland'. In other words, sightseeing fostered German patriotism. Domestic tourism also decreased regionalist, religious and class differences by bringing together people from all over the country. By 'link[ing] the national comrades from North to South, from West to East', tourism overcame the problems of particularism. It allowed Germany's disparate 'tribes' (*Stämme*) to 'get to know, understand and treasure each other and so become a united German people'; at the same time, the *Volk* was made aware of its 'racial uniqueness' through the experience of being a tourist.<sup>50</sup>

Did the Nazis believe their continued assertions about the ideological value of tourism? Moreover, did these convictions motivate actual touristic policy? The material examined in Chapter 2, which moves from the ideological factors considered here to matters of organization and infrastructure, suggests that they did. To date, there has been no detailed reconstruction of the *Gleichschaltung* of commercial tourism. That chapter goes some way towards filling this gap, but it also raises broader questions about the nature of the Nazi power apparatus. How total was the Nazis' control over tourism? Did the continuities provide evidence of the limits to National Socialist power? Do we find the same type of administrative chaos here that reigned elsewhere?

Having established the institutional foundations of German tourism under Hitler, the following three chapters turn to the distinct, but often overlapping tourist cultures in existence after 1933: the Nazi, the

'normal' and the KdF. If tourism is the general activity at issue in *Seeing Hitler's Germany*, then the term 'tourist culture' denotes the wider machinery that promoted, codified and facilitated that activity. Chapter 3 describes the explicitly politicized attractions and ideologically inflected tourist literature that emerged after the seizure of power. Like Nazism itself, the resultant Nazi tourist culture awakened various fantasies and offered intensely emotional experiences, making it genuinely popular with German and foreign travellers alike. In contrast, the mode of tourism examined in Chapter 4 had little in common with this thoroughly Nazified tourist culture. Instead, it appeared historically continuous with what had come before. Where the swastika was conspicuous by its absence, an apparent normality helped to maintain the popular legitimacy of the Nazi regime.

Chapter 5 turns to the KdF holidays, but places them within the larger context described by the preceding chapters. Official propaganda claimed that all sectors of German tourism cooperated without difficulty, but tensions and outright hostility often marred the relationship. In response to these conflicts, the regime made regular concessions to the demands of the commercial tourism industry, the desires of middle-class tourists and the wishes of KdF participants themselves. Chapter 6 investigates international tourism under Hitler: travel by Germans out of the Reich and travel by foreigners into Germany. Both were issues of great concern to the Nazi regime. Since commercial tourism continued long after September 1939, Chapter 7 follows our narrative into the war years. By working to uphold public morale, the German tourism industry sustained the Nazi war machine. Some familiar motifs appear in this chapter: the Nazi regime's attitude to consumerism, its desire for popular support, the degree of its control and the continuities it permitted and promoted in order to sustain a semblance of normal, everyday life.

Normality – or at least the perception of normality – served many ends in the Third Reich.<sup>51</sup> The Nazis' electoral successes were based in large part on their promises to get the country back to normal after the tragedies of war, the shame of the Versailles Treaty and the upheavals of the Republic. According to Detlev Peukert, this 'longing for normality' was 'the most deep-lying reason for the consent given by the majority of the population to the Nazi regime'.<sup>52</sup> There was also a second component to Hitler's vision of a normalized German society, which allowed for continuity even with the hated Republic. In a speech to his Reich Governors on 6 July 1933, he explicitly prohibited a 'second revolution'. The radical transformation of social and economic structures still sought by groups like the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) would not occur. The