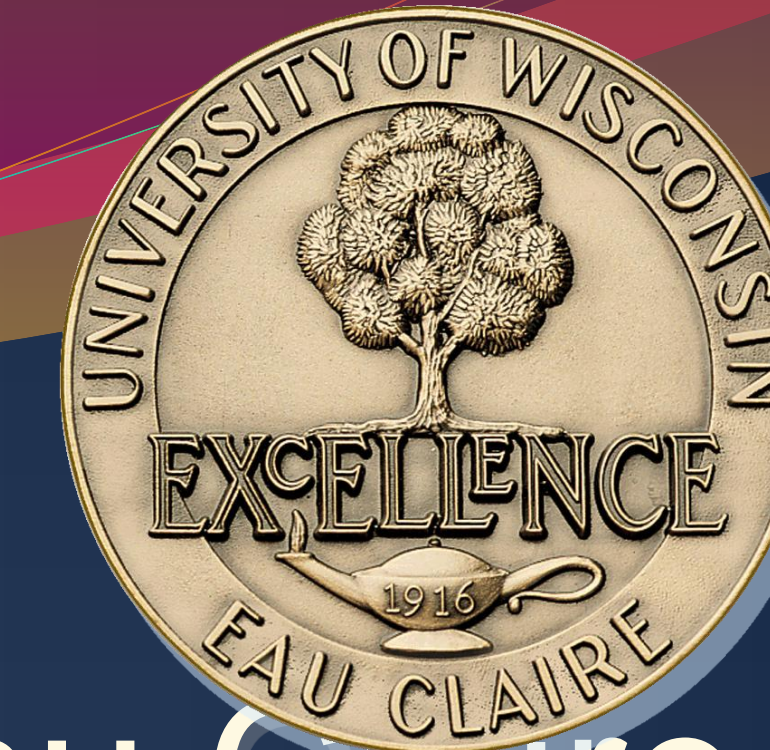


# Let's Go! Female Travelers



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## What can historians learn from a gendered analysis of “Let’s Go! Europe” travel guides?

- **Background:**
  - Tourism is an important medium for public engagement with the European past. Americans encounter and engage with narratives about the European past prior to their trip when reading travel guides and during their trip when they visit historic sites, monuments, and museums. What types of narratives about the past are found in travel guides? How have travel guides and the narratives that they tell about the past changed with social and cultural transformations in America in the 1970s and changes in the demographics of Americans participating in European tourism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century?
- **Methods and Research Plan:**
  - Our study tried to answer these questions by focusing on gendered representations of the tourist and the European past in guide books produced in the late 1970s. We selected the time period and the specific guides for a number of reasons. We wanted think about the “democratization” of European tourism that took place in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century against the background of an expanding tourist industry and low cost airfares. We also wanted to trace the impact of second wave feminism and the new field of women’s history that began in the late 1970s. The Let’s Go! Europe series allowed us to explore both issues. Harvard university students created this series in the 1970s in order to meet the needs of a younger generation of American travelers. They were specifically designed as an alternative to guides for a more conservative, older, middle class traveling public. We asked how guides marketed as “socially progressive” helped to create gendered images of the traveler and the European past? The two guides that we specifically looked at were published in 1975/76 and 1979/80, guides produced during the beginning of second wave feminism.
- **Research Questions:**
  - What role do travel guides play in the social construction of gender?
  - What assumptions do travel guides make about the gender identity of the tourist?
  - Do the travel guides recognize that increasing numbers of young female travelers are touring Europe?
  - Did representations of the traveler and their needs change with the beginning of second wave feminism in America?
  - Did representations of the past change with the beginning of feminist scholarship in academic history?
  - Do we see a greater integration of women’s history themes, topics, and sites in the guides by the 1980s?



## Let’s Go: A Budget Guide to Europe! 1975-76

Minor attention to gender identities, roles, and needs.

- This edition of the guide was intriguing when it came to portraying the traveler. The guides used a gender neutral language for the traveler. For the most part, the author used the traveler or similar wording or avoided using pronouns. There were a few places where male pronouns were used. Because there were multiple authors to the book, it is possible that one author didn’t realize the use of the male language or maybe was biased to males. For the most part, however, language was unbiased.
- The most prominent area of gender difference can be found in information about traveler’s needs, a country’s culture, and rules for the use of hostels and hotels.
  - In England where the rules specifically stated that unmarried couples would receive a fine if a hotel room was rented by an unmarried couple.
    - There were a few other countries that had rules similar to this, but England was the most interesting and gave the most penalties.
  - A majority of the hostels had curfews, but the women’s curfew was normally two to three hours earlier than the males’.
  - There were multiple hostels that were male only or female only throughout Europe. These were often the Y.W.C.A. hostels or the Y.M.C.A. hostels.
- Another important issue in the books was hitchhiking.
  - In the book the authors stated women should never hitchhike, especially alone in some countries. These countries were primarily Muslim states, like Turkey and North African countries.
  - In some countries it was acceptable for women to hitchhike as long as they were in pairs or with a male.
  - There were a few countries in which single women had the best luck hitchhiking. Many of these countries also advised on how the females should dress. (skirt with hair down)

## Let’s Go: A Budget Guide to Europe! 1979-80

Greater attention to gender identities, roles, and needs. Evidence of the impact of the beginning of second wave feminism in America.

- While many aspects of this guide were the same as the 1975/76 editions, there were a few minor changes.
- Male and female pronouns were only used in the guide when referring to a specific male or female for the most part. The main time the male pronoun was used outside of this context was when it came to working. There were multiple times when it was workmen, fishermen, and postmen who were mentioned.
- The major change was that at the beginning of the book was that we now find a female specific travelers section.
- This section explained the gendered expectations of women in different cultures and explained what a female would need to watch out for. It warned of hitchhiking, hostels, and appearance.
  - This section stated that women would have the shortest time hitchhiking but have a greater risk than males.
  - Overall, traveling was cheaper for men than women. Women would only pay the same price as males if they were accompanied by a male.
  - It stated that only in England, France, and Sweden had feminist movements taken place.
    - Ireland was one country that the authors stated was sexist. The authors stated that the Feminist Liberation Movement had not yet taken place. The biggest warning was that women were not welcome in pubs and should avoid going in to them.
  - Sex differences were greater in Europe than in the United States, so the traveler needed to be prepared that often European men might be more sexist.
    - Although the men were sexist, these men would normally give compliments and flirt, harmless behaviors for the most part.
  - The authors also advised that the women should be careful how they dressed and should watch local women to figure out what to wear.
  - The biggest piece of advice that this section gave women was to be educated about the country and how the locals felt towards women and then obey the social rules of the countries.



## Gendered Representations of the Past

Relative stability in the historical narratives of the past included in the book with regard to gender in both guides (1975/76 and 1979/80). Little evidence of insights from the new feminist women’s history appearing in the historical representations in the guides.

### Great Females

- There have been a number of important women throughout history, but only a few made it into the guide book. There were a few more males seen in the guide books, but overall history was scarce throughout the books. There was more history in the 1979/80 edition of the book.
- Most of the women portrayed were famous well known figures. Examples:
  - Queen Elizabeth
  - Marie Antoinette
  - Marie de Medici
  - Catherine de Medici
  - Anne Frank
  - Julia Childs
- There were more male historical figures mentioned than women; many were involved in war or revolution and a few were religious saints.
- There were no female revolutionaries or religious saints mentioned throughout the guides.

## What sights were recommended?

- The same type of sights were recommended in both of the editions.
- The most common places recommended in all of the countries were:
  - Palaces
  - Churches
  - Monasteries
  - Ancient ruins
  - Museums – mainly history and art, sometimes weapons and social history
  - Natural sights such as mountains, rivers, and oceans
  - Shopping
- For the most part the sights recommended were the most well-known spots.
- These locations often were not specifically geared towards one gender over the other.
  - The spots that may have been gender geared were the weapons museums towards the males, and shopping towards females.



## Findings

- These guide books provided a great deal of information on traveling in the late 1970s. It showed that 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminism was a growing phenomenon. According to these guides, some countries such as Denmark and Sweden had already made great strides in gender equality, other countries such as Ireland, Morocco, and other Muslim countries presented challenges for the assumed young female traveler from America.
- The first guide was very gender neutral, but when the later guide was introduced paid more attention the specific needs of female travelers. It also featured more on how feminism was affecting the different countries. It provides an insight for female travelers on what issues were taking place in the country, and pros and cons of visiting these countries.
- Despite the authors recognition of the feminist movements taking place in Europe, there was a high level of continuity in terms of representations of the past, however. There is little evidence of insights from the new feminist women’s history appearing in the historical representations in the guides.
- This was shown by the lack of important female historical figures and gender specific historical sites recommended. The second book made more progress in this manner, but still had much room for improvement. In general, few new insights from women’s history were included either in the larger narratives told about a country’s past or in information given about the significance of visiting a particular site.
- Further questions to consider on this topic:
  - Do the gendered elements of the guides change in later editions after 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminism had a greater affect on American society and as women’s history became a more established field?
  - Are these gender roles seen in the more specialized editions of Let’s Go! such as England, Western Europe, Germany, Italy, and France? Do we see more inclusion of women’s history in the historical background information in these country specific guides?

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