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The image of the tourist is one which has long attracted scorn ('Of all poisonous animals,' the English diarist Francis Kilvert wrote in 1870, 'the most poisonous is a tourist'), yet one which many of us self-consciously embody, or otherwise have imposed upon us, from time to time. We know the rituals, how we are supposed to behave, and where we are expected to point our cameras. If we want to try to capture the 'true essence' of the 'authentic' scene before us. And yet, in holding a camera to our eye, we also affect a sense of distance, ostensibly removing ourselves from our surroundings. It is as if we can glimpse – for a fleeting moment – a world somehow made strange by the very act of observation.

*Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visibility* offers an array of fascinating insights into the key issues at stake here. Bella Dicks explores the ways in which public places are made to assume a visitor-friendly face, demonstrating that it is a complex process achieved primarily through various strategies of cultural display. Of particular significance, she argues, is the manner in which 'visibility' is defined. To be visible, public places must be seen to be consumer-friendly, accessible, interactive, participatory and safe. Dicks suggests that such a definition has profound implications for our sense of what counts as 'culture' in everyday contexts. Culture effectively becomes something to be handled, modelled, even consumed. It also becomes equated with the idea of the world as a mosaic of distastefully colonial, performable identities, the pleasurable experience of which is available for purchase. She proceeds to examine a number of display sites configured in this way, including city spaces, heritage exhibitions, museums, theme parks and virtual destinations in cyberspace.