



Issue #5 of the *Journal of Festive Studies*
Party Tourism section proposal (guest edited by Alix Boirot)

While many types of festivities -- religious celebrations, film festivals, and traditional local festivals -- have been touristified over the last 150 years, what is generally referred to as “party tourism” (i.e., travel for which the main motivation is partying) is more specific. It involves one type of party that is usually urban, commodified and privatized, targets a young clientele, and centers on the massive consumption of psychoactive substances (alcoholic or otherwise). The US Spring Break, which started in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, after the second world war, is one of its best-known avatars, generating billions of dollars each year. Similar to Spring Break, Schoolies in Australia were initiated in the 1970s by entrepreneurs who saw this type of event as a way to de-season the local tourist market and thus make a profit year-round. They have become a tradition for young Australian high school students and a major tourist/festive product. The youth party travel industry emerged slightly later in Europe and consolidated its position in the 1990s and 2000s, with specialized tour operators offering packages that add nightclub passes or open-bar access to the classic transportation and hotel packages. Over the last thirty years, new party resorts targeting young people under 25 have sprang up, while older ones have specialized in the young and festive clientele. Travel agencies have been key actors in this industrialization of the party: tour operators specialized in party tourism are selling a marketed, secure, relatively reproducible, segmented product.

Needless to say, local festivals and dances have never been free of commercial exchange. Fairs or street vendors have always been part of public/civic festivities. Our purpose here is not to perpetuate a false opposition between small, local, traditional,” supposedly noncommercial festivals and contrived, exaggerated, artificial urban festivals. It is easy to disqualify the more or less informal festive practices of young people because one does not see any trace of the sacred or of subversion in them, and to reject them as vulgar practices of mass consumption; or to read them as a symptom of a society that no longer offers solid professional perspectives to its youth. Party tourism has often been subjected to strong, negative judgments in which one may discern a form of moral panic. The truth is that festive traditions are constantly reinvented and (re)born. Small-scale celebrations are not incompatible with the profit motive, and urban festivals are not by essence without soul. If the festive framework proposed by tourism promoters aims at limiting surprises – the organization of the parties leaves little room for improvisation –, perception may be different at the individual level, with the unexpected arising from the recesses of the “party playbook.” Customers play as big a role in the party as organizers do. The framework guides, but does not totally constrain. The partying practices of young Westerners are thus complex and make for a disparate leisure practice (Crozat and Fournier, 2005). Analyzing them requires that scholars avoid the twin pitfalls of moral/ social panic and festive enchantment.

As an economic sector, party tourism is not homogenous either. Tourist trips with a central festive motivation may be linked to a one-off event such as a festival or to a permanent festive fabric (as is the case with certain cities) or seasonal (think of certain European seaside resorts, for instance). Different party destinations do not attract the same type of clientele (whether in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, social class, etc.), and they all have their own geography. Psychedelic raves, for

instance, are more common in neglected neighborhoods; "mass youth tourism" or "clubbing on holiday" take place in seaside resorts; freshman orientation parties at business schools usually take place in privatized spaces; stag and hen parties are commonly organized in downtown areas, etc. The type of party that we intend to focus on in this issue is of the commercial, organized, and professionalized kind – festivities that “are immediately part of urban and globalized modernity” (Lallement, 2019: 10).

One way to look at them is as sites of youth identity construction. Marketing professionals certainly see the development of party tourism as a way to attract young people. This generational segmentation is rather new. In many older festivals, the whole community participated, at least until a certain time in the night. By focusing on the youth, big nightlife entrepreneurs are reinforcing the generational gap. Which does not mean that party tourism cannot be transgenerational, of course (this is the case with many Southern France ferias, for example). The "youth" category itself is far from uniform. Thus, certain forms of party tourism concern young heterosexual men in particular and have been considered a privileged site for the construction of masculinities (Thurnell Read, 2011; Boirot, 2020). Bachelorette parties are its counterpart for the study of the constructions and representations of the feminine.

Party tourism can also be seen as a site of conflict – over noise, waste, land use, etc. – between residents and partygoers, or between city officials and residents. These issues, much like the risks incurred by partygoers (physical harm, substance abuse) are widely discussed in the literature on party tourism. While important to our discussion, these themes will not be central, so as to leave room for other, less-explored topics.

In brief, this issue sits at the intersection between tourism studies and festive studies. The two fields actually have a lot in common, as notions of escapism, time out of time, and liberation are projected onto both festivals and travelling. The main question that we wish to investigate is actually the following: What does the party do to tourism and what does tourism do to the party?

Consequently, we welcome papers centering on the following topics:

- the Night Time Economy (NTE) in touristic places
- the circulation of goods in party tourism
- marketing campaigns in party tourism (Tour operators, night clubs, etc.)
- forms of labor in party tourism locations
- the production and the regulation of parties (workers, managers, Tour Operators, police, public authority...)
- party tourism as an element of discourse (political, economic, moral, etc.)
- history of party tourism and of places related to it
- methodological issues concerning party tourism (research methods, reference works, etc.),
- party tourists' experiences, values, and representations
- the sociology of the actors/stakeholders of party tourism (age, class, race, gender, nationality, etc.)

As this list shows, our call for submissions is meant to attract scholars of all disciplinary backgrounds, including (but not limited to) urban sociologists, tourism studies scholars, cultural historians and anthropologists.

Scholars interested in submitting should upload their article (6,000-12,000 words) with an abstract (c. 250 words) and a brief bio statement (150 words max.) to the *Journal of Festive Studies* website by **June 30, 2022**. Please consult the [author guidelines](#) and our [About page](#) for more information on the journal before submission. If you have any further questions, please contact Alix Boirot (alix.boirot@chess.fr).

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