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LUXURY OF IGNORANCE:  
How Tourism is Changing Identity, Culture,  
and Ways of Life in Kenya

By

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## ABSTRACT

**YOUR NAME HERE** LUXURY OF IGNORANCE: How Tourism is Changing Identity, Culture, and Ways of Life in Kenya. Department of Anthropology, June, 2001.

This thesis explores the way that tourism has affected the identity, culture, and lifestyle of native Kenyans. Tourism is a global industry bringing multitudes of people to destinations all over the world every year. It is inevitable that the interaction between cultures through tourism causes change. Since its Independence on December 12, 1963, Kenya has relied heavily on tourism as a means of economic development and modernization. A study tour of East Africa from September through December 2000 gave me the opportunity to study the lives of Kenyans and their relationship to tourism.

Studies of tourism often focus on the beneficial aspects of the industry, such as the development of infrastructure, industry, the economy, foreign investment, and even nature conservation to destination countries around the world. My fieldwork in Kenya drew my attention to an increasingly researched, more troubling side of tourism, which I decided to explore through this thesis. In particular, I found that the Kenyan people are developing a sense of inferior identity, commodifying their culture, and being displaced from their land because of tourism.

As Kenya has grown with tourism, it has become incorporated into the lives of Kenyans. Providing accommodations to attract tourism and meeting tourist expectations necessitates change. Tourists are different from native people and often bring their culture with them when they leave home, exerting a sphere of influence on local populations. Kenyans have been influenced by tourism. Awareness of such influences is necessary to promote cultural understanding and to eliminate the negative impacts of tourism in Kenya.