Journeys into authenticity and adventure: Analysing media representations of backpacker travel in South America

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Abstract
In November 2007, at the end of my PhD candidature, I travelled to South America. Having spent the preceding four years studying backpacking culture and examining the role of travel in the lives of young people, this was to be a reward of sorts. I envisioned this trip as compensation for my hard work; as a chance to unwind, relax, and experience something, somewhere, new. Although I had heard plenty about South America over the course of my research, I had not actually travelled there, ethnographic fieldwork instead being confined to Central and North America, Europe, and Central and South-East Asia. Though my trip was configured as a holiday, as an opportunity to remove myself from the world of analysis and do something practical – to improve my Spanish, to volunteer, to engage in physical activity – I found it harder than expected to extricate my ‘traveller self’ from my ‘researcher self.’