

# From the Hippy Trail to Pop Festivals: Two Projects

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On the way to Woodstock, 1969



Somewhere between Iran and Afghanistan,  
November 1975.

Just a typical day. Looking out the windows, chatting, stopping for loo breaks. There is a rhythm that happens just as it does on any trip. The bus and your bus-mates become your temporary home and life. The whole trip took 36 days, from London to New Delhi.

Photograph: Dee Atlas



Near the Khyber Pass, May 1968

On the road towards the Khyber Pass we stopped and my friend and myself went over to a nomads' camp. There were no men around, only women and children, and they were fascinated with my blonde hair and kept touching it. As we walked away the boy on the left picked up a stone and threw it at us: presumably he'd finally decided that as the oldest male, he had to guard the camp!

Photograph: Irene Milburn

## Project One

### A History of the Hippy Trail

#### Conceptualisation

There has been very little research on this theme. Our history is a pioneering work.

#### Research

Based study consisting of 34 face-to-face interviews, 10 questionnaires and 35 published accounts of travel (including commercial publications, self-published texts and contributions to social media)

#### Themes

Diversity of travellers; the search for comparisons. The main chapters take the form of four discussions concerning the nature of travel:

- were they searching for drugs?
- sex and romance
- were they just tourists?
- were they like pilgrims?
- discussion of representations of the trail in film, fiction and non-fiction

#### Outcomes

*A History of the Hippy Trail* (forthcoming, MUP, 2017)

'From Kerouac to the Hippy Trail: some notes on the attraction of On the Road to British hippies', *Studies in Travel Writing* 19:1 (2015), pp. 1—17.

#### Under consideration:

'The Consul and the Beatnik: The Establishment, Youth Culture and the Beginnings of the Hippy Trail (1966—68)'

'Raga Rock: Popular Music and the Turn to the East in the 1960s'

#### Towards another project

Working on the hippy trail developed our interest in how forms of spirituality developed and changed in the 1960s, and in the effects of the counter-culture.

#### Spin-off article:

'Visions of Albion: ancient landscapes, Glastonbury and alternative forms of nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism* [forthcoming].



## Project Two

### A Social History of Pop Festivals: Woodstock, Glastonbury, Altamont, Isle of Wight

**Conceptualisation:** while there have been a few works on the pop festivals at Woodstock and Glastonbury, most of these are celebratory and uncritical in nature. They often start with the organisers' ideas for the festival, and assume that these ideas then structured the festival-goers' experiences, leading to ideas of single, unitary experiences shared by all present.

We seek to identify and map the diversity of experiences, considering also those outside the festival, and what festivals might have represented to a wider public. We therefore consider issues such as police reactions to festivals; debates concerning proposed festivals by local councils; the churches and festivals; public hostility to 'hippies' (leading to the question: what is a hippy?); inspirations for festivals; the ideal of the free festival; New Age spirituality and festivals.

There's also the further question of: what constitutes a 'successful' festival? Why has Glastonbury developed into the largest festival in Europe, while Woodstock only produced one rather less celebrated anniversary event?

**Research:** interviews with current and past festival-goers; archive documentation concerning festivals and their organisation; published autobiographical material (both in books and on social media).