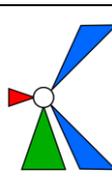


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<p><259/c></p>  <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>hot on the trail of the finest plastic junk in the world from Niagara to Bangkok The attack of the tack culture. Ephemera. TRAVELLING these days, especially on a low budget, is supposedly aided by the plethora of guidebooks, travel companions and survival kits. They give us information on the medieval pottery museum, birthplace of local legends and the address of the youth-hostel-cum-doss-house. Once the experience of local life and culture has been assimilated, the traveller moves on, a more complete person. This approach ignores the delights of ‘tack travelling.’ Time spent in the tack emporiums of any town or city gives a greater insight into the ways and customs of a place, then trudging around dolls museums and marine parks, or even witnessing displays of traditional, tourist-orientated dancing. What is tack? It ca n’t be defined, it just exists. It jumps out of the shop window, attacks your aesthetic sense and begs to be admired. Mass-produced ephemera is a regular feature of the times. Each place has its own particular style of tack. China’s ‘four modernisations’ ignores a fifth one - mass development of silly objects. Pictures of cats made out of synthetic material and stuck on to plastic plates are available in virtually every store. Why visit the gardens or the pagodas of Suzhou, when much more can be gained by attempting to buy a 1950s style mannequin. A day spent finding China’s Number One sea shell carving factory, brought forth the awesome sight of the Great Wall made entirely of shells. Every visitor to Toronto is told to visit the CN tower. A fatal mistake. One then may miss the Ukrainian religious tack store - Pope plates. 3-D Jesus key rings. Then there is Honest Ed’s a five-storey Aladdin’s cave of the cheap and gaudy. The beauties of the Buddhist temples of Thailand are no match for the plastic clocks, surrounded by the Thai royal family, readily available. Forget the Berlin Wall itself, there are some lovely kiosks selling cold war kitsch. Perhaps the most wonderful place on earth (though I am told on good authority that the souvenir shop at Graceland takes some beating) has to be Niagara falls. Shop after shop filled full of plastic ‘snow and shakes’ of the falls, cushions proclaiming one’s love for the falls, key rings, tea sets, T-shirts ad infinitum. The true tack traveller would spend his/her honeymoon in a motel, on a heart-shaped water bed. (The true story of Niagara is that when the European settlers first arrived they were so impressed by the tack stores, that they decided to build the falls). What are</p> <p>the parameters of the tacky way</p> <p>? It is essentially a non-authoritarian mode of travel. There is no point booking a package holiday - this contains the essentially free spirit of the tack traveller. However, ‘macho travelling’ is to be avoided - one need not travel eight days in the toilet of a train to sample ‘real life.’ Find a fairly comfortable base, a place to spread out the newly-acquired tack. An early rise is not necessary, as tack is always there. NB: When in Socialist countries, if something exquisite comes up, snap it up immediately, as centrally-planned economies can play havoc with the supply of tack. Avoid ‘healthy’ outdoor pursuits which involve the use of your own legs. Waiting around markets is the correct function of a tack traveller’s</p>
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legs, not clambering through the foothills of the Himalayas (where there is a distinct lack of plastic ephemera). The tack traveller must be bold, prepared to go where no tourist dares to step with the tack antennae on constant alert. A medical supplies shop in the back streets of Shanghai is not the average travellers idea of an attraction, but for the tack traveller it contains hidden treasures. Here is a test: if you were in Warsaw, faced with an hour to fill before catching a train, would you go up the tallest building in the city to experience a panoramic view, or rush to the bookstore/poster shop in order to buy a massive Telly Savalas poster? A true tack traveller does n't even have to think. Judy Rumbold on the tell-tale trim and trappings of the tourist. Montage by Graham Rawle Button up a package deal THE SEASONED traveller can be identified at check-in by a conspicuous absence of specially designed leisure clothes festooned with pockets, zips and velcro. There is no superfluous gadgetry or foldaway, stowaway gimmickry. The rest, and this is what (snobbishly) differentiates intrepid wanderers from tourists, travel considerably less lightly. Unfamiliar locations invite panicky packing that will cover all eventualities, and casualwear manufacturers encourage normally chaotic tourists to be minutely organised. Everything must perform a specific function - from myriad pouches on a holdall to passport holders and water bottles to sling around the neck. Ludicrously over-equipped tourists might recognise themselves from this checklist: Track or leisure suit. Must be bulky, ill-fitting and very obviously new looking. Sickly pastel colours are the most popular - pale lemon, pink, green or blue - punctuated by unattractive logos and go-faster stripes in tones that jar hideously with the original colour scheme. Leisure suits effectively soften the line of the body and look like adult-size romper-suits. They lend to an airport lounge the look of a grotesque,