

## When Tourism Becomes Overtourism

This past summer, a friend of mine and his wife traveled to Italy for a month. Among the places they visited was a small town on the coast southeast of Naples named Minori. Minori's population is 2,743. Minori is small, but apparently it has been discovered by the tourism Gods. Now throngs of tourists, including my friend and his wife flock there. He said that they were walking along a path that wound in front of a small house with a small yard and a view of the harbor. An elderly woman was sitting on her porch as dozens of people walked by within a few feet of where she was sitting. He said that he looked at her and suddenly felt guilty for intruding on her space that she could no longer enjoy as she has in the past. Doubtless the elderly woman and her family chose that house for its proximity to and view of the harbor. Now she gets to look at tourists as they look at her.

And I think that's it. Tourism becomes overtourism when it becomes intrusive; when the volume of tourists keeps the residents from being able to enjoy the place they call home. It is not the air quality or the water quality or waste management. It is not something that can be measured. It is the sense that something has been taken from you.

For many of us it is the incessant noise from the planes and helicopters that keeps us from enjoying our own home. For others, local trails have been taken over by tourists, and for many more it is the fact that downtown has become off-limits during the season. At a macro level it affects our sense of community.

At times we have upwards of 15,000 tourists a day. That's a lot.

At the same time, I am sure that there are residents in Juneau who are not bothered at all by the increasing volume of tourists. It is a subjective matter, but clearly it has reached a point where the issue needs to be confronted head on. But the Assembly won't do it. The Assembly is all about the status quo. The issue whether more tourism should be discouraged as a matter of policy should be decided by a special advisory vote by the citizens of Juneau. Do we want more cruise ships or not? The people should decide.

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