



Illustration by Adam Graff.

Going For a Spin

We have all seen them: advertisements; brochures; and window displays that tell us that out there, in the Big Wide World, there are places we just must go. But how many times does that veritable ‘Paradise’ or ‘Heaven on Earth’ turn out to be more like hell on wheels?

Travel brochures’ vocabulary is often so positive, and the use of superlatives so blatant, that they have travel cynics grabbing for their nearest waxed-paper sick bags. We all know the perils; what’s more, I can assure you, it has happened to a person near you. Like me.

That tropical beach hut that appeared so mind-bogglingly fantastical in the brochure, sitting alone on the edge of a sparkling sea, is in fact built under a radio tower and the next door rubbish dump has been artfully erased from the magazine picture by an Art Director using Photoshop.

The five-star hotel that has yet to have its roof and plumbing finished; or the incomplete pool standing empty while your children howl and your hubby threatens to call the lawyer – sadly, we have all been taken for that ride (usually to nowhere-ville).

So next time you leaf through the holiday pages, check out those ‘special’ words such as:

Reading between those well-writ lines is essential to avoid a would-be sybaritic, out-of-body experience becoming an out-of-your-mind, out-of-your-pocket nightmare.

Rustic: Ah yes, that over-used adjective that promises not so much a villa in Tuscany, but water once daily and power blackouts at 7 pm.

Secluded: Hmmm... miles from the nearest restaurant; you’ll need a car, or more like a Humvee to get through that alligator-infested mangrove.

Designed to evoke tropical luxury: This usually means that the house is made of bamboo, and come rainy season it will blow away before you have time to say “Hello! Isn’t that our beach house up there in the eye of that anti-cyclone?”

Minimalist: Bare essentials. Here, ‘bare’ constitutes no frills, which in turn means no soap, no loo, no running water and the service... what service?

Close to nature: Yup, that’s the wildlife all right, in the form of a 100-pound male baboon who is graciously sitting on your designer sofa helping himself to your fruit platter while his family of 10 have shredded the contents of your Samsonite, leaving meringues of baboon poop in your new, half-price, Shenzhen-knock-off Gucci loafers.

Reading between those well-writ lines is essential to avoid a would-be sybaritic, out-of-body experience becoming an out-of-your-mind, out-of-your-pocket nightmare. When they assure us that the beach is ‘buzzing,’ we must first ask if this is with malarial mosquitoes or sand flies?

How ‘modern’ are the Modern Conveniences? An Outback-style, long-drop toilet is okay for Stone Age Man or your 23 year-old deadhead boyfriend, but Auntie needs her comforts. This Auntie, however, has found a way around all this. Instead of reading the darned things, she now writes them!

So the next time you see that euphemistically-worded brochure singing the praises of the ‘lonely jungle hideaway,’ exemplified by the image of a romantic bush bungalow, keep in mind who is behind these words, and never, ever, forget the power of adjectives – oh yes, and the latest version of Photoshop. 🌐