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## Movie, play and book focus on female sex tourism

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### Press release

## Movie, play and book focus on female sex tourism

Baltimore, MD -- July 25, 2006 -- If you think the idea of women traveling to the Caribbean for sex is just confined to the movie *Heading South* -- think again!

An estimated 600,000 Western women have engaged in travel sex from 1980 to the present. About one in 30 holiday encounters leads to a lasting relationship.

Featuring Charlotte Rampling as one of a trio of female sex tourists in Haiti in the 1970s, *Heading South* can be expected to increase the number of women seeking holiday romances.

The play *Sugar Mummies*, slated to open in London next month, similarly features lots of sex between middle-aged women and the men they visit in Jamaica, and may further boost awareness of holiday flings in the Caribbean and worldwide.

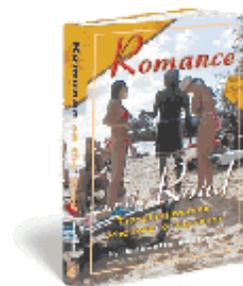
"The Jamaican tourist board noted a quantifiable increase in trips to Jamaica after the 1998 release of the film *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*," notes Jeannette Belliveau, 52, the Baltimore, Md.-based author of **Romance on the Road: Traveling Women Who Love Foreign Men**.

"*Heading South* and *Sugar Mummies* are even more explicit looks at travel sex than *Stella*," Belliveau noted. "*Heading South* shows a whole group of women -- American, English and French Canadian - - interested in no-strings relationships with Caribbean guys.

"Whereas *Stella* might be taken as a movie about one American author's accidental romance on holiday," she added, "*Heading South* makes it clear that this is a mass phenomenon and a response to dating wars and man shortages at home.

"Overall, the film is a tremendously accurate look at female sex tourism."

Given Haiti's economic and health problems, Belliveau noted that "*Heading South* may encourage women to visit, rather than Haiti itself, the neighboring Dominican Republic, with its underground reputation for





**Romance on the Road: Traveling Women Who Love Foreign Men**  
\$23.07

having men, many who are Haitian emigres, who want to give visiting women an unforgettable sexual experience."

### **Female sex tourism accurately captured in *Heading South***

Both *Heading South*, the film, and *Romance on the Road*, the book, touch on the engines propelling female sex tourism:

- **Man shortages.** In the movie, Ellen (Charlotte Rampling), aged 55, notes, "If you are over 40, and not as dumb as a fashion model, the only guys who are interested in you are natural-born losers or husbands who's wives are cheating on them." Male shortages are real and especially acute for urban Western women, while male surpluses are common in the developing world. A plane ticket may cure loneliness for both parties.
- **The commodification of sex and sexual connoisseurship.** In the film, Legba, the Haitian lover of two of the women, receives necklaces, meals and bus money from his girlfriends, and appears to genuinely like both of them in return. The women's gifts procure them a youthful, virile young lover who would be off-limits to them back home.
- **Benefits to poor men.** Legba is shown giving cash obtained as gifts from foreign girlfriends to his impoverished mother. In the real world, in the West African nation of the Gambia, young beach boys similarly pass their earnings from foreign girlfriends to their mothers, who protested when the government wanted to crack down on their sons' activities.
- **Healing for the divorced or unhappily married woman.** Brenda (played by Karen Young) enjoys her first orgasm at age 45 with a teen-aged Legba. And Sue, a visitor to Haiti (played by Louise Portal), is rejected by men at home in Montreal. But in the sweetest scene in the film, her lover Neptune, a fisherman, sells his catch of the day and then goes to a sleeping Sue, undressing, slipping into bed, and tenderly stroking her arm.
- **Identity loss.** Sue notes, "Here, I feel like a butterfly, free, alive, unattached. I love Neptune. Elsewhere, it'd be laughable. But not here. Here it isn't, because we all become different." Women who lived sedate lives at home, ignored by male co-workers and friends, feel free to act differently far from home, when foreign men treat them as desirable and worth pampering.

### **Basic facts about female sex tourism**

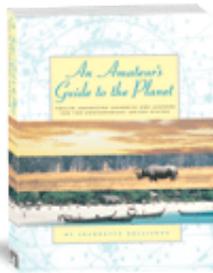
(Please cite *Romance on the Road: Traveling Women Who Love Foreign Men*):

- In addition to the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Barbados remain the giants of Caribbean sex tourism by women.
- Worldwide, Greece, Spain and Italy also attract female holidaymakers, as do Gambia and Kenya in Africa. The beach boys in Phuket in Thailand and Bali in Indonesia appeal to Japanese and Australian women.
- Less well-known destinations for women seeking romance with local Romeos include Nepal, Chiang Mai in Thailand, Mexico, Costa Rica, Belize, Cuba, virtually all smaller Caribbean islands, Ecuador, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Fiji, and Salvador de Bahia in Brazil.
- An estimated 600,000 Western women have engaged in travel sex, from 1980 to the present. About one in 30 holiday encounters leads to a lasting relationship.
- Casual travel sex by women has been around for more than 150

years and likely began with Lady Jane Digby, an Englishwoman, in 1849, as she entertained three suitors during a brief visit to Rome. Throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, American and English women visited Southern Europe, the Near East and India for scandalous love affairs, typically with marchese, sheiks, maharajas and princes.

### About the author

Jeannette Belliveau, right, a former editor at the *Washington Post* and *Baltimore Sun*, and a Jefferson Fellow who has studied Asia-Pacific issues, has written the only book to date on female sex tourism. She has been interviewed about female sex tourism by the *New York Times*, the *Observer* (London) and *Woman* magazine (UK), as well as French and Spanish documentary film-makers.



Her first book, **An Amateur's Guide to the Planet**, has been used by 30 colleges and universities to teach cultural geography.

*Romance on the Road*

(Beau Monde Press, June 2006) received scholarly review from 25 authorities in five countries, including such experts on tourism and mating behavior as Donald Symons (UC-Santa Barbara),

Scott South (SUNY-Albany), Erik Cohen (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and Petri Hottola in Finland and Ron de Graaf in the Netherlands. See a list [here](#).

For more information, contact [Jeannette Belliveau](#). Free virtual media kit is available [here](#).