



Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France

Douglas P. Mackaman

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The artful use of one's free time was a discipline perfected by the French in the nineteenth century. Casinos, alpine hiking, hotel dinners, romantic gardens, and lavish parks were all part of France's growing desire for the ideal vacation. Perhaps the most intriguing vacation, however, was the ever popular health resort, and this is the main topic of Douglas Mackaman's fascinating study.

Taking us into the vibrant social world of France's great spas, Mackaman explores the links between class identity and vacationing. Mackaman shows how, after 1800, physicians and entrepreneurs zealously tried to break their milieu's strong association with aristocratic excess and indecency by promoting spas as a rational, ordered equivalent to the busy lives of the bourgeoisie. Rather than seeing leisure time as slothful, Mackaman argues, the bourgeoisie willingly became patients at spas and viewed this therapeutic vacation as a sensible, even productive, way of spending time. Mackaman analyzes this transformation, and ultimately shows how the premier vacation of an era made and was made by the bourgeoisie.

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