This Practice section is devoted to using global positioning systems to guide tourists around their destination through the internet connection on their wireless laptops, their Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), or even their mobile telephones. This same technology will also help them find the attraction they are looking for, a particular type of shop, and even the nearest toilet. Whatever happened to asking a policeman? Or even just someone who lives there?

And there you go — controversy already! This article challenges you to think about all kinds of issues — our acceptance (or rejection) of new technology; our view as to what it means to be a tourist; and the extent to which we wish to control our every action in order to eliminate either risk, or wasted time, or both. You can just see the tourist muttering (to his PDA) ‘Today I am at 48° 51’ 32″ North and 02° 17’ 45″ East — so it must be the Eiffel Tower’.

There you go again — I am being pejorative! Implicitly I am disparaging or belittling this technology, and implicitly I am expressing disapproval. Methinks it tells you more about me than it does the technology itself. It tells you that I like meeting and talking to people in foreign lands — often they are more interesting than the sights we are supposed to stare at or wander through. It tells you that I am slightly technophobic (very technophobic if you ask my children with reference to satellite television, VCRs, CD players and mobile telephones). And it . . .

But what the heck! It does not matter what I think or if I will use this technology. Curran and Smith’s article is interesting and many, many people will become satellite guided tourists. I am just not sure if that makes for a less lonely planet or a more lonely planet. Anyway I hope to see you at 51° 14’ North and 00° 34’ West in June 2006.

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December 2005