
JODY MACE

Paradise Found . . . and Lost

[OPRAH MAGAZINE/May 2008]

Before You Read

Can you think of a few ways in which global positioning satellite (GPS) navigators have changed the way in which people travel unfamiliar roads? Has this technology altered the way tourists experience a new region and its inhabitants? What has GPS added and what has it taken away?

Words to Learn

Provençal (para. 1): pertaining to a region of France (adj.)

quizzical (para. 1): expression of puzzlement (adj.)

ludicrous (para. 5): amusing or laughable (adj.)

bushwhack (para. 5): to clear a path through thick woods (v.)

paradox (para. 9): a statement that is seemingly contradictory and yet is perhaps true (n.)

U-turn! Recalculate! Keep right! Thanks to her new, slightly boxy GPS navigator, Jody Mace is on time, on track, on the straight and narrow—but at what cost, she wonders . . .

A few years ago my family was exploring Provençal villages with the help of a huge, wrinkled map. The owner of the house we rented had recommended a certain restaurant in a nearby village called Cabries. When we got to the village, we drove around in circles, unsure exactly where the restaurant was. Had we already seen that stone building or was it a different one? And where were the street signs? Finally, we called to a young man on a bicycle and pointed to the name of the restaurant on a piece of paper. We looked at him in a quizzical way that clearly indicated we were lost. He launched into rapid-fire directions, well beyond our limited grasp of French. Seeing our helpless expressions, he motioned for us to follow him. When we arrived at the restaurant—faded yellow set off with a bright red awning—he waved goodbye and coasted away.