

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13

# We're on holiday, get out of our way

## Backpackers

7pm, Channel V

THIS is a reality show about backpackers. That's all the information some readers will need before hurriedly flicking the page to find out what more hygienic offerings are screening this week. Rick Stein mucking about with seafood, for example.

But if you're in more of a cheap 'n' cheerful, vomit 'n' sawdust mood, read on.

*Backpackers* follows three Victorian country boys — Mick, Jag and Lee — as they shoestring their way across Europe, a continent with a long history of being invaded by barbarians. The opening spiel about backpacking through the ages thoughtfully sets the tone: "Carrying everything they need to survive on their backs, these intrepid travellers voluntarily subject themselves to substandard living conditions in exchange for something extraordinary: an opportunity to open their minds and immerse themselves in different cultures, to see and do things they never dreamed of. Not to mention get absolutely shit-faced, party with fellow travellers and try to have sex with people from all over the globe."

Which I suppose, in a roundabout way, counts as cultural immersion.

I went in expecting, nay, hoping to hate it. Not something I'm particularly proud of, but there it is.

It starts off delivering what you'd expect: three wide-eyed yooofs arriving in London, marvelling at the expense of everything, getting well-meant advice from the locals ("England's a shithole, honestly," explains a window cleaner), getting horribly bladdered every few hours, flirting with fellow dipsos of the opposite sex at various bacchanalian events, nursing



Boys' own adventure: *Backpackers* follows Mick, Jag and Lee across Europe

## There's the promise of misadventures in love, drugs, visas and haggis

hangovers and trying to run out of money during the fourth week of what is meant to be a yearlong adventure. Looking ahead through the episode guide (there are 26 episodes, screening on weeknights), there's the promise of misadventures in love, drugs, visas and haggis, running with (or from) those poor bloody bulls at Pamplona and stopping in distinctively named places, such as the French town of Condom.

So, no Patrick Leigh Fermor-style ruminations here, then.

The bugger was that I enjoyed it. Sure, it's oafish and basic, but there's

a real sweetness lurking amid the litres of beer, and Lee, Jag and Mick (who sometimes looks as if he may have been scooped from the same gene pool as Jack Black) work well together in front of the camera. And weirdly, considering this is reality television, it feels real.

I'm not sure the 7pm timeslot is the best place for it, nor am I convinced about *Backpackers* as a name. The lads could have been just as honest if they'd tipped their hats to Frank Zappa and called it *Titties and Beer*.

But then SBS might have bought it.

James Jeffrey

7.30  
9.15  
6.40  
8.30  
10.15  
11.50  
1.35  
3.10  
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9.20  
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1.30