How to define and approach cultural tourism

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If cultural tourists are one of your priority target markets then you may find this resource from Audiences London’s Cultural Tourism Symposium ‘Wish You Were Here’ useful. You’ll find various definitions for cultural tourism, links to other resources and further reading on best practice approaches.

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Cultural Tourism Resources

Factsheet 1: Definitions of Cultural Tourism
Factsheet 2: Key facts and figures
Factsheet 3: Segmenting Cultural Tourists
Factsheet 4: How Visit London can help you reach more visitors
Factsheet 5: London 2012 Opportunities
Factsheet 6: Glossary
Case-studies

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Definitions of cultural tourism

Visit Britain defines cultural tourism as:

‘Visits to enjoy visual and performing arts, museum, galleries, heritage attractions, artists’ open studios, art fairs, auctions, public art and architecture, festivals, films and other cultural events.’

These visitors want to “enjoy exhibitions and performances, to sample local food and learn about local customs, to enjoy the atmosphere of a place and to learn something. They enjoy experiences that fire their imagination or offer a chance to connect with the past”.

It is perceived as a growing market, as visitors generally are seeking a more authentic experience. It also seems like an area that adds depth to the general tourism offer – cultural activity conveys vibrancy and also a potential ‘call to action’, when packaged appropriately. Added to which the time seems to be now for addressing cultural tourism as the cultural programme was a strong part of the Olympic and Paralympic bid.

Cultural Tourism, How you can benefit, A VisitBritain advisory guide

http://www.tourismnetwork.co.uk/publications.htm

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development definition:

Cultural tourism (or culture tourism) is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those peoples, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape their way of life. Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. This form of tourism is also becoming generally more popular throughout the world, and a recent OECD report has highlighted the role that cultural tourism can play in regional development in different world regions¹.

Cultural tourism has also been defined as ‘the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs’²

The 3 Pillars of Cultural Tourism

There is universal agreement amongst the tourism industry that Cultural Tourism is an incredibly difficult thing to define. However, when we drill down, three key pillars seem to exist:

- Cultural Heritage (eg Shakespeare)
- Built or Historical Heritage (eg Tower of London)
- Contemporary Culture (eg modern art, theatre)

Visit Britain’s Topic Profile on Cultural Tourism: an essential guide to understanding Cultural Tourism


If cultural tourists are a priority target audience for your organisation, Audiences London can offer a surgery session to support your organisation to define its objectives, refine your messages for target groups and use your resources effectively.

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