

CGG30 Unit 3: Culture and Tourism

Activity 2: Appreciating Culture

Overview

Appreciating culture can occur in many ways from attending a local musical festival to viewing art masterpieces in a museum. The key to cultural tourism is in appreciating all aspects of culture. In this lesson, you will learn the difference between high culture and popular culture, threats to cultural sites from tourists and possible solutions.

Lesson

Tourists have a variety of ways to experience cultural tourism; from music festivals, to battlefields, to stunning architecture to museums full of art. Cultural tourist sites can be either physical or man-made, as long as the site holds some type of meaning to a culture. Many tourists believe that the heart of cultural tourism is viewing the past to learn a culture. The past can be viewed in a variety of ways from actual sites to museums to art galleries. These sites in turn act as promoters of culture.

Appreciating a culture can be categorized into two types: HIGH CULTURE and POPULAR CULTURE. High culture tends to have an elitist stereotype attached to its attractions that include opera, theatres, museums and architecture. There is a belief that in order to fully appreciate high culture attractions, specialized knowledge of art or architecture is needed. In contrast, POPULAR CULTURE attractions are targeted for the masses. This can include music, theme parks, festivals, dances and so. Any specialized knowledge is not needed.

Tourists can get a taste of an areas culture through virtual tours of exhibits or museums. Refer to the link at the end of this section to check out both high culture and popular cultural attractions. When viewing these tours try to focus on how these museums reflect a culture--- customs, music, language, art and so on. As well, what benefits is there for museums in creating virtual tours rather than have tourists come through the actual museum?

THREATS TO CULTURAL SITES

Although, tourism can bring in much needed revenue, mass tourism to cultural sites can also bring some serious consequences:

- Destruction of cultural sites—tourists wanting pieces of Rome’s Coliseum or the Great Barrier Reef as souvenirs
- Overcrowding
- Vandalism
- Human lifestyle—acid rain destroys historic landmarks
- Increased crime rates

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

In response to threats against cultural sites, many programs have been initiated to preserve cultural and environmental environments. This is known as HERITAGE CONSERVANCY. Because Heritage is such a broad term it can include landscapes, historic places, natural sites, built environments, collections and experiences. It can also be the oral and written history and traditions.

One such program is the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). With the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ICOMOS purpose is to safeguard and conserve important heritage sites and ensure that people are educated about the importance of maintaining monuments. Each year special cultural sites that are endangered are reported on and possible solutions and awareness campaigns are developed. Past reports have included:

- the impact of the Indonesian tsunami of 2004 on cultural attractions
- the importance of shipwrecks such as the Titanic or Lusitania
- the impact of the Middle East conflicts effect on cultural sites

The success of the ICOMOS is found throughout the world. The ICOMOS uses a variety of methods to spread the word on the importance of preserving significant sites for future generations. They do through:

- awareness campaigns such as the International Day for Monuments and Sites on April 18
- the development of training programs
- developing an architectural library in Paris's ICOMOS Documentation Centre
- advising UNESCO on possible World Heritage Sites (to be examined later in the unit)
- publication of newsletters
- conferences

RESTORATION PROJECTS

Restoration projects to protect significant cultural sites can be found in every corner of Earth. From restoring Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel in the Vatican to unearth and clean his original work for future generations, to Machu Picchu, Peru where sacred monuments are now off limit to tourists in order to protect what remains.

A significant Canadian cultural icon that has been restored and ultimately protected under a heritage conservancy program is the Vimy Ridge Memorial at Hill 145, France. This monument was unveiled in 1936 to remember all Canadian soldiers who died in World War I and have no known graves. Inscribed on the memorial is 11, 285 names. The Vimy Memorial has undergone a \$20 million restoration that began in 2004.

Assignment

1. What is the difference between high culture and popular culture?
2. Provide an example of a high cultural attraction and a popular cultural attraction within Ontario.
3. What are some things that can threaten a cultural site?
4. What are some methods that can be used to spread the word on the importance of preserving significant cultural sites for future generations?
5. What is a cultural site restoration project? Provide an example.