

CGG30 Unit 3: Culture and Tourism

Activity 3: Religion and Cultural Tourism

Overview

Religion can be both a powerful motivator and a barrier to tourists. Many tourists embark on pilgrimages, hajjes or other journeys to religious cultural centers. Some go for faith while others go to learn more about the religion. Unfortunately, intolerance and prejudice can mar these journeys. You will research a different faith and in a letter relate your findings to your teacher.

Lesson

ISLAM

One of the fastest growing religions that numbers 1.2 billion people, Islam is divided into two main branches: Sunni and Shiites. Muslims (a person who practices the Islamic religion) pray five times each day in the direction of Mecca—the spiritual center of Islam. Makkah, Saudi Arabia was the birthplace of the prophet Muhammad in 571 AD. Muslims are required by their faith to make a religious pilgrimage, known as the HAJJ, at least once in their lifetime; exceptions are made for poverty and physical disabilities. While in Makkah, various rituals such as “stoning the devil” are performed by the nearly two million faithful. Tragically, with so many people participating, accidents can occur. In 1998, 180 people died and 250 were crushed during the stoning the devil ritual. In 2001, 35 people died in a similar tragedy. Besides Makkah, many of the Muslim pilgrims also consider Medina, Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem, Israel as spiritually significant.

CHRISTIANITY

The largest religion in the world numbering 2.3 billion, many Christians travel to the Holy Land, to see the birthplace (Bethlehem, Israel) and death place of Jesus. Christianity has many denominations, each with its own unique doctrine and its own special sites of significance.

The largest denomination is the Roman Catholic Church, which sees its spiritual center as Vatican City. The Vatican, in turn, contains numerous spiritual attractions: Sistine Chapel, catacombs, Michelangelo’s La Pieta, St. Peter’s Basilica and Roman architecture, and so on. The popularity of the novel The Da Vinci Code has increased tourists’ interest in the religious sites used in the book. As well, many Catholic tourists travel to famous shrines such as Lourdes or Fatima.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, another Christian denomination, looks to the “East” for its spiritual centers in Mt. Athos, Greece and Constantinople, Turkey.

Other Christian denominations known as Protestantism (which includes Anglicans, Lutherans, and Church of Latter-Day Saints) also have significant sites. The Anglicans view the Canterbury Church as their head church. The Church of Latter-Day Saints has the Salt Lake Temple, Temple Square and the Mormon Tabernacle as their significant religious sites.

HINDUS

Found mostly on the Indian subcontinent, there are one billion believers. Hinduism encompasses a multitude of religious beliefs, traditions, and writings. Through a variety of practices (such as many forms of yoga) Hindus can realize atman—the true nature of self – and experience the Divinity that is everywhere. Hindus celebrate many festivals from Diwali, the festivals of lights, to Holi, the spring festival of colours and lights, to Sankranti a harvest festival. These festivals are derived from their myths which happen during seasonal changes throughout the year. Like the Islamic Hajj, many Hindus travel to Varanasi, India where they bathe in the holy water of the River Ganges to wash away their sins.

BUDDHISM

Lopburi, Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha, is a spiritual center for 350 million Buddhists from Asia. Buddhist monasteries and temples throughout Asia attract many tourists wanting to learn about this unique religion that combines philosophy and psychology.

JUDAISM

Judaism is one of the oldest religions known to humans that is still practiced today and has contributed to the foundations of Christianity and Islam. As a result, Jerusalem is also significant to the Jewish faithful, who travel to Jerusalem to pray at the Western Wall. Sadly, other significant Jewish religious sites include the concentration camps in Eastern Europe such as Auschwitz, Treblinka. Six million Jews were targeted by the Nazis for extermination along with millions of other people who did not conform to the Nazi “superior race” agenda. Every year 600,000 tourists travel to Auschwitz to remember what happened. Many of these tourists are descendants of the victims who come to pay homage to the deceased.

RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS



Although only the five main religions were examined, there are many more faiths that have cultural significance to tourists. However, not all religions can co-exist peacefully. Throughout history, humans have fought with each other over religions and this extends to religious sites. The most contested spots are found in the Middle East—Jerusalem and Mecca.

Jerusalem is the spiritual center for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The “Noble Sanctuary” is located on a 35-acre parcel of land that contains two mosques: the Dome of the Rock, a site for the Hajj, and the Aqsa Mosque, a site of worship. In this area the Jews also have the “Temple Mount” which contains the holy site of the Wailing Wall. Christians also turn to Jerusalem as a holy site where their church began.

The impact of conflict is felt throughout the tourist industries: damaged property, lost revenue for hotels and restaurants. The loss of tourists has a ripple effect—no revenue means owners can’t pay

employees who then can't pay their own expenses. In northern Israel, the scene of major fighting, tourists no longer come to see the hillsides that are now marred by war scars caused by shells and fires.

In 2006, tourism dropped 50% and Israel's Gross Domestic Product declined by 1% because of fighting. Lebanon has also had its tourism industry destroyed because of the ongoing religious and territorial conflicts.

What can tourists do to make sure that they avoid possible areas of conflict? Canadian tourists can turn to the Foreign Affairs website to check for possible conflicts. However, Foreign Affairs Canada cannot stop someone from traveling to a dangerous area; they can only strongly suggest that travelers do not go there.

Assignment

Religion has many different meanings for tourists. Some travel because of the need to strengthen their faith while others travel to learn about the religion. In this assignment, you will research one of the religions or faiths listed below and relate your findings in a letter to your teacher.

Include the following information:

1. A basic summary of the faith
 - a. when it started
 - b. who, if a specific individual or group, started the faith
 - c. where it can be found
 - d. number of faithful
 - e. the tenets or main beliefs of the faith
2. A description of the sites of religious significance
3. A description of the festivals or rituals associated with the faith that would attract tourists
4. Conflicts that tourists may unexpectedly bring
5. The appeal of the religion to possible tourists

Remember to write your letter in first person and be descriptive. Try to paint a picture of the culture with words. Graphics and illustrations are acceptable. Make sure to acknowledge the sources of your graphics if you use them in the letter.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

Cao Dai	Confucism
Sikhism	Baha'i
Jainism	Shinto
Zoroastrianism	Tenrikyo
Falon Gong	Taoism

Indigenous—animists, shamanist or a specific tribe—like the Inuit, Haida

Letter Rubric

Categories	Level 1 (50 - 59%)	Level 2 (60 - 69%)	Level 3 (70 - 79%)	Level 4 (80 - 100%)
Knowledge and Understanding Demonstrates knowledge and information about the topic	Demonstrates with limited knowledge and information about the topic	Demonstrates some knowledge and information about the topic	Demonstrates considerable knowledge and information about the topic	Demonstrates thorough knowledge and information about the topic
Thinking Determine the reasons (e.g., business, recreation, education, religion) for patterns of tourist travel within selected regions	Determines the reasons (e.g., business, recreation, education, religion) for patterns of tourist travel within selected regions with limited effectiveness	Determines the reasons (e.g., business, recreation, education, religion) for patterns of tourist travel within selected regions with some effectiveness	Determines the reasons (e.g., business, recreation, education, religion) for patterns of tourist travel within selected regions with considerable effectiveness	Determines the reasons (e.g., business, recreation, education, religion) for patterns of tourist travel within selected regions with a high degree of effectiveness
Application Transfers knowledge and skill to new contexts.	Transfers knowledge and skill to new contexts with limited effectiveness	Transfers knowledge and skill to new contexts with some effectiveness	Transfers knowledge and skill to new contexts with considerable effectiveness	Transfers knowledge and skill to new contexts with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication Gathers and communicates geographic inquiries with purpose	Gathers and communicates geographic inquiries with limited purpose	Gathers and communicates geographic inquiries with some purpose	Gathers and communicates geographic inquiries with considerable purpose	Gathers and communicates geographic inquiries with a high degree of purpose

Note: A student whose achievement is below Level 1 (50%) has not met the expectations for this assignment or activity.