EXTENDED REALITY TOURISM EMBRACED BY THE POST-COVID ERA

The Covid-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on the world of tourism as we know it. In this sense, many changes in the industry should be expected in the coming years, one of which is definitely the growth of the so-called 'extended reality tourism'.

But how exactly should one understand the term extended reality tourism? Two things are hidden under this expression – augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). Two revolutionary concepts are changing the tourism industry.

AR is a technology that gives tourists the opportunity to relive the past glories of an ancient monument, while VR gives travelers the chance to visit a venue afar.

Petra, One of the ER Pioneers

One of the pioneers of the growth of extended reality tourism is the UNESCO World Heritage site in Jordan – the historic city of Petra.

In this context, the authorities in charge of the management of the destination launched the so-called Xplore Petra app, which gives visitors the opportunity to experience the endless possibilities of extended reality.

This app gives tourists the opportunity to enjoy the most famous sites of Petra, for example, the monastery, amphitheatre of the royal tombs, in the form of life-size 3D models.

But this is only one of the examples. There are also other VR-based experiences in Lebanon, Sweden, South Africa as well as the Faroe Islands', all introducing interesting concepts, from ruin reconstructions to virtual safari streams.

Still Only the Beginning

Nevertheless, it must be noted that while many projects have launched throughout the pandemic and the process has been speeded up by the health crisis, it is still only the beginning, and it will take some time until extended reality tourism is implemented on a higher scale.

The reason for this is that there are still things that need to be improved. For example, creators will have to somehow overcome the difficulties connected to crowded sites as well as bright sunlight.

It Must Be Sustainable

Finally, the whole process must be sustainable. What should one imagine under the term sustainability of ER? It's simple. **ER tools should serve to help providers of tourist services, not rule them out of the business.**

Many destinations around the world rely heavily on the tourism industry and thus there is the necessity to implement ER in a correct manner that will not, for example, replace tour guides. Ideally, both VR and AR experiences should be connected to the providers, and they should be the ones offering them.

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