

DISASTER TOURISM IN NEW ORLEANS CAUSING CONTROVERSY



The residents of New Orleans – particularly those in the heavily effected Lower Ninth Ward – have had a lot to deal with since Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005. The latest problem they must overcome is the controversial issue of disaster tourism.

New Orleans is an obvious destination for this recent trend because of the level of destruction and the plight of the city over the last seven years. The questionable tours exploring the hurricane hit areas were banned but recently the problem has become worse and furious residents are demanding action from local authorities.

The tours were outlawed to stop tourists interfering with the regeneration work and the rebuilding of the community. Tours of the devastated Lower Ninth Ward were big business for local tour operators, with approximately thirty companies trying to offer trips around this neighborhood for \$25 per person, and unsurprisingly the ban was not welcomed. **Many companies still carry out tours at the risk of being stopped and fined and the practice has led to mixed reactions from local inhabitants.**

Recently there have been increasing complaints about the impact of these tours on the area with many people calling for tougher action and pleading for these companies to show them more respect in their time of suffering.

However, not all local residents are so opposed to the idea of tourists touring their neighborhood. In fact many welcome the potential attention and revenue. Some people support the bus tours as a way of increasing public awareness over the continued plight of the area while others take a more active approach by selling goods and souvenirs to the tourists.

The positive reaction to this niche tourism industry has placed some uncertainty on the ban and city councilor Earnest Charbonnet has engaged the residents in talks over allowing a restricted number of buses to return rather than keeping the outright ban. While this may seem like a possible compromise for the residents and the industry, it will not appeal to those that want the ban to be more heavily enforced. Whatever happens in the Lower Ninth Ward, this is sure to remain a controversial issue for a long time to come.

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