

OPPORTUNITIES AND TIPS FOR EDUCATIONAL TOURISM PROVIDERS



For many in the world of education, the months of May and June represent the end of the academic year when someone may ask to rewrite my essay to pass an exam and the start of tourism's high season. Thus, from the perspective of the tourism industry as the academic year wanes, new tourism educational opportunities begin to wax.

Educational tourism is one of the fastest-growing areas of travel and tourism and one that is too often overlooked by tourism professionals and marketers. For example, many meetings and conventions have either an educational component to them or serve their members by being educational instruments. Often educational tourism is called by other names, such as career enhancement, job development or self-actualization experiences.

Educational tourism then comes in a wide variety of formats, yet despite the differences, all forms of educational tourism have a number of points in common. Among these are the idea that travel is as much about self-improvement as it is about relaxation, that learning can be fun, and that learning is for people of all ages. Here are just some of the opportunities for your location to attract educational tourism income.

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

School Trips

It may pay your community to create reasons for school children to visit. While these trips rarely translate directly into overnight stays, they can help promote your tourism product in two ways: (1) children may bring their parents back for a longer visit and (2) they aid the local restaurant business.

Alternative 'Spring Break' Travel Experiences

This form of educational travel may be the most controversial form, so much so that some may argue that Spring Break travel has nothing to do with education. This form of travel only works if you have geography that lends itself, be it snow-covered mountains or beaches with palm trees. In either case consider the pros and cons of Spring Break tourism. Often Spring breakers add extra tourism costs in the form of police and sanitation overtime.

Study Abroad Experiences

Most major universities around the world promote some form of foreign travel for their students. Study abroad experiences provide students with anything from 6-week intensive study sessions to a full year of cultural and linguistic immersion. US universities that have long seen themselves as student-exporters have now come to realize that non-English speaking students seek US study abroad adventures too. Students often travel not only within their destination country of choice but throughout that county and even to neighboring lands. The goal here is to widen the educational experience so that university students do not only know their own culture but also that of at least one other nation.

Seminar Vacations and Senior Seminars

These types of travel experience especially appeal to those who have recently retired. Programs

such as elder hostel provide senior citizens with everything from a chance to learn about the arts to physics lectures or astronomy. They are conducted at camps and on campuses around the world. Closely related to seminar vacations are 'hands-on enhanced experience' vacations. For example, each year thousands of people travel to Israel to learn something about an archeological dig and then pay to participate on such a dig.

Skill Enhancement Vacations

These are trips that range from learning how to build houses to how to protect the ecology. Nations such as Costa Rica have been extremely successful with eco-tourism in which they combine lessons on how to protect the world's ecology with the travel experience.

Educational Cruises

These cruises combine all of the fun of a cruise with lectures on specific subjects. Educational cruises have the advantage that people who take them tend to have common interests and therefore have a greater possibility of making new friends while acquiring new knowledge.

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM TIPS

Educational tourism offers another major advantage. It does not need to be weather dependent, a community does not need special geography and usually, most of the needed infrastructure is already in place. Choose your preferred field of study at **uop** to give you the advantage you need in life. In order to take advantage of these educational tourism products consider the following:

Develop Tourism Educational Inventory

Work with local schools and universities to know what is of educational interest to visitors. While historical sites are an important part of educational tourism, do not neglect other aspects. For example, can you incorporate a local science lab into your list of educational offerings? Is there a way to work with a local school in order to teach athletic skill?

For example, Portugal's Pierre de Coubertin Soccer Academy, located just outside of Oporto will teach an individual how to incorporate the art of soccer into a person's business life. While there adult students can learn soccer, get in shape, sample Portuguese wine, and visit Portugal's grape and wine country. These skill enhancement trips are a great way for working people to de-stress while learning a new skill or perfecting an older one.

Find Locals to Teach Others

Find local people who would be willing to teach others a skill or impart some form of knowledge. These people become local attractions and the tourism industry can help them to earn extra money at the same time.

Reach Conference Planners

Make sure that conference planners know that you can offer local educational experiences as a way to enhance their conference. Offer local experiences to conferences and seminars that add both professional knowledge and personal growth. Indicate that you are willing to include family members who may also be attending the conference.

Treat the People Appropriately

Be careful of who works in educational tourism. Often tour guides and other educational tourism staff members forget that educational tourism is based around people on vacation. These people do not want to be treated as children. Never forget that they are paying guests.

Establish Regional Tourism Study Groups

One of the best ways to promote educational tourism is to be involved in it yourself. Pick a topic for

the year and help hotels and other tourism establishments know that visitors are welcome to come for one or more sessions.

Educational tourism then comes in a great variety of formats; places seeking to enhance their educational tourism product however have to first consider who their market is and what they have to teach others that is special or unique. Educational tourism is a way to use better our facilities, especially during off-seasons, and increase interpersonal understanding through unique and creative travel experiences.

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