

DARK TOURISM: ATTRACTED BY TRAGEDY?



People have been always drawn to tragedies. There are always more than enough rubbernecks gawking at the scene of a motor accident. Recently a bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River and this event has drawn many onlookers. The police had some problems with massive crowds that are seeking a closer look. Some of the onlookers have gotten too close and therefore they were arrested.

No one really knows what draws human beings to such locations. Nevertheless, this activity has now an official name, it is known as Dark Tourism. Other names used for this activity are thanatourism and grief tourism. Dark tourism is tourism involving travel to sites associated with death and suffering. Grief tourists enjoy traveling to places like Cambodia, Ground Zero in the USA or Kutna Hora in the Czech Republic. All the places witnessed deaths of many people. Dark tourism could actually be a good business for some people. In 2002, the town of Soham in Cambridgeshire became the centre of international media attention when two young schoolgirls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, were tragically murdered by the caretaker of their local school. This murder has brought tens of thousands of people to the town with flowers and tributes. For some people Soham has become just another tourism destination. The fact is that there were coaches full of tourists making special detours from the sights of Cambridge to visit the scene of this dreadful crime. The Ground Zero site in lower Manhattan is now listed in New York City tourism guides. But there are other activities that are nowadays considered dark tourism even though it is little bit misleading. There are people who visit old battlefields or e.g. Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz in Poland. People are interested in history. Therefore there are mixed opinions on the dark tourism. Some see it as a disparagement and some as praiseworthy curiosity.

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