

DARK TOURISM: THE DEMAND FOR NEW EXPERIENCES



Dark tourism responds to the need of contemporary tourists to live unique, impactful, and perhaps extreme experiences. Places connected with tragic events are growing in popularity all around the world.

The term "dark tourism" includes very different practices and activities. For example, heritage tourism, educational tourism, film tourism, adventure tourism. It includes a number of niches according to the theme or the site of the visit: **places of executions and death in public, places of mass extermination or death, murders, battlefields** or places where famous people died (James Dean, John Fitzgerald Kennedy), internment sites (mausoleums, monoliths of war and cemeteries), sites related to slavery, sites affected by environmental disasters such as hurricanes, tsunami, prisons, simulations of events related to death and catastrophe.

Travelers interested in dark tourism experiences come from various age groups, including seniors as well as young students. Some of them are attracted by cultural and historical aspects of the places, others seek more nature-bound information.

The most popular dark tourism destinations include the Bran Castle in Romania, the Paris catacombs in France, Auschwitz in Poland, Sleepy Hollow, Salem, New Orleans, and the Eastern State Penitentiary in the U.S., Naples in Italy and many more. In Europe, tourists can follow the route of 49 cemeteries recognized by the Council of Europe as cultural sites. They are located in 37 cities in 16 countries and Spain has the most cemeteries on the route.

One of the examples of experiential tours related to dark tourism are special tours offered on the Mexican border. Night walks are organized that simulate the crossing of the border with the United States by undocumented immigrants. The route consists of experiential and emotional such as crossing tunnels and suffering the kidnapping by fictitious traffickers of people.

Drug trafficking is the theme of narco tours offered in Colombia. Visitors explore several places linked to the famous drug trafficker Pablo Escobar.

Civil War is the theme of various tours in Spain. They mostly include visits to anti-aircraft shelters and bunkers.

All these different types of tours fall under the umbrella of dark tourism. The industry has been boosted by various war movies and TV series and as such is dynamically growing.

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