

VIRTUAL TOURS: BRITISH MUSEUMS GET INTERNATIONAL VIEWERS THROUGH ALIBABA



Since the beginning of the health crisis, many cultural institutions have relied on virtual tours to keep in touch with the public. With Fliggy, the travel subsidiary of the Alibaba group, several million Chinese have been able to discover British museums from a distance.

Even though tourists have been returning to airports and train stations for several months, the number of visitors in some cities is still below normal. **Therefore, many cultural establishments have decided to offer virtual tours to keep the public interested.** From the Prado Museum in Spain to the Palace of Versailles in France, including the Louvre, many have signed a partnership with Fliggy, the travel subsidiary of the Alibaba group, to offer virtual tours to the Chinese population.

A live stream hosted by the British Museum attracted 370,000 viewers in the first minute. From September to March, the museum hosted more than 30 live online events and short programs for viewers from more than 50 countries. More than half of the viewers were between the ages of 25 and 44.

London's Natural History Museum drew 100,000 Chinese tourists during the first minute of a virtual tour around its dinosaurs and "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" exhibition. This was its largest digital event ever, even though its doors remained closed to the public during the pandemic.

According to Alibaba, the interest is also financial, as it is possible to display direct links to the museum's merchandise during the live streams, such as posters of the Mona Lisa or replicas of Ming Dynasty vases.

The Victoria and Albert Museum was only able to open for 15 weeks during the pandemic until March 2021, resulting in a 97% drop in visitors from the previous year. The virtual tour of its sculptures and fashion exhibits attracted 30,000 viewers, nearly a quarter of its usual physical visitor traffic.

"As the world continues to travel, it has never been more vital for museums and tourism providers to consider ways in which technology can virtually open their doors to the Chinese public," says David Lloyd, Alibaba's managing director for the UK, Netherlands and Nordic countries.

Chinese tourists' spending on culture, heritage and museums jumped from RMB 58 billion (\$9 billion) in 2015 to RMB 61.9 billion last year and will reach RMB 155.8 billion by 2025, according to market research provider Euromonitor International. **The survey also shows that 85 percent of respondents consider experiences, such as visiting a museum, to be much more important than buying goods,** such as luxury goods, during a vacation.

Date: 2021-09-20

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/british-museums-get-attention-of-chinese-viewers-news12171>