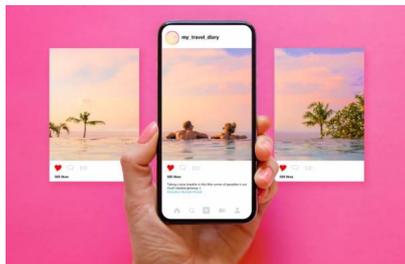


THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LEISURE TRAVEL



According to a recent Bitkom study, as many as six out of ten people have already chosen a travel destination just to be able to share a photo on their social media channel. In the 16- to 29-year-old age group, 71 percent prefer a place according to its Instagram ability. Statista survey also shows 75 percent of respondents use social networks for holiday planning. In comparison, only 47 percent of friends and family opinions inspire new destinations.

The advantages of social media for travel

Social networks are so popular for travel inspiration for a reason. While you often have to search longer for good tips on conventional search engines, you can see suitable videos and photos directly on Instagram or TikTok when scrolling relaxedly. It does not take more than typing the word "travel" into the search bar or "liking" travel-related posts. Then, cities, countries, or sights previously off your radar are suggested. Photos and videos give you the impression that you're on-site yourself. Current events or art exhibitions are also suggested.

More than just inspiration

You also have the advantage that others' opinions are displayed in the comments and videos. This gives you a more authentic impression of sights, restaurants, or accommodations. Other users can also provide tips for the trip that may not be found in some Internet articles. In this way, you may find out whether a place is not worth the hype, and you can even save yourself a visit.

The risks of Instagram tourism

However, the Instagram hype also brings some difficulties. Thousands of people see "insider tips" on the Internet, and people suddenly overrun many places that have gained notoriety through social media.

Severe consequences for nature and locals

Instagram tourists trample nature, disturb rare animal species in their environment and destroy cultural assets.

In addition, many tourists are even willing to deliberately put themselves in danger for the perfect photo. The Bitkom survey already cited also questioned the willingness to take risks for a good photo. According to the survey, about 22% of respondents have disregarded barriers or signs, and 14% have deliberately put themselves in danger.

Last but not least, Instagram tourism also has disadvantages for inhabitants. They must accept rising costs and housing shortages due to a preponderance of tourist accommodation. This is one of the reasons why there are always campaigns to curb mass tourism in Dubrovnik, Venice, or Amsterdam.

From illusion to disappointment

In addition to impacting holiday destinations, travel posts on social networks can be misleading and spoil a trip. It's rare to see how crowded the sights are on social media. Influencers use tricks, taking photos early at sunrise or choosing angles where you can't see others. One example is the "Gate of Heaven" in Bali. On Instagram, there are numerous photos of users posing between two towers. Behind them is Mount Agung, whose reflection looks like a lake. But it's just a puddle and a mirror.

In addition, images on Instagram and other platforms are often edited. This can lead to a distorted image, as places in the photos look more colorful and vivid than in reality. In the same way, other people or garbage are retouched. You might expect a wonderful place on Instagram and then be disappointed, in fact.

It is pretty easy to spread false information on social media. Some people rely only on data from Instagram or TikTok for their research. It makes sense to check information about places before departure. People often post videos of sites and convey false information. For example, you can see a different location than what is written in the caption or comments. People who have already been there or have done research can expose misinformation. Others, on the other hand, trust the information and travel to a completely wrong place.

Understanding of Instagram tourism

The benefits of social media as travel inspiration are unmistakable. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok offer a straightforward way to explore new destinations and gather visual impressions of the world. However, Instagram tourism hype has its challenges. Social media popularity leads to mass tourism, damage to ecosystems, and a burden on residents. Edited photos or misinformation spread can distort reality and lead to disappointment on a journey. As exciting as Instagram tourism can be, it's also essential to have a balanced understanding of the pros and cons.

In general, travelers should avoid focusing too much on the perfect snapshots and instead enjoy the impressions of the trip. Social pressure often exists to present the best possible trip, and you must remember to live in the moment. It helps to do a "social detox" on vacation and put your cell phone aside for a few hours. And sometimes it's nice to explore the area on your own. You may find real "insider tips" without using social media.

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