

## HERITAGE TOURISM

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Heritage tourism is a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the U.S. says it best, "Traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." Heritage tourism is considered one of the fastest growing segments in the industry and equates to a \$171B annual spend.

81% of U.S. Tourists are considered "cultural tourists," which equates to 56% of the U.S. population who indicate that they included at least one cultural, arts, historic or heritage activity or event while on a trip in the past year. Cultural tourists spend more and stay longer. Average spend is 60% more, approximately \$1319 per trip as compared to \$820 for the traditional domestic leisure traveler. Cultural tourists take 3.6 trips vs. 3.4 annually.

41% of cultural tourists are affluent and well-educated baby boomers. They want to engage with locals through immersive experiences, enrich their lives and prefer leisure travel that is educational. 40% will pay more for distinctive lodging. Millennials are a growth market for heritage tourism as 73% want to engage in a destination's arts and cultural assets. 2/3 rated authenticity as extremely important in their travel decisions.

Most people don't leave their home saying, "I'm going to be a cultural tourist today," but their motivations, actions and activities are impacted by the availability of cultural assets. Many say a specific historic/cultural event was the main reason for travel. Historical places and museums rank top on the list of activities at a destination at 66% followed by cultural events and festivals at 45%. Shopping is always a favorite activity. 68% travel by auto and they have a high rate of last-minute planning of one month or less. There is also a higher propensity for taking group tours for heritage tourists.

Heritage tourists travel to unique destinations. Their adventures take them to off the beaten path destinations in search of authentic experiences. They want to learn something new during their travels.

Reaching the Heritage tourist is a challenge due to their diversity in interests. Partnerships with your Visitor's Bureau, State Tourism Office, Trade Associations, such as ABA, and regional/local partnerships will provide saturation and diversity. Build relationships with receptive and tour operators to drive your product. Social media, email campaigns and web promotions are effective tools as well as traditional advertising. Technology is a driver for travel decisions and there is power in images.

Sustainability is a continued trend in heritage tourism. It is imperative to preserve and protect the resources that attract tourists while maintaining community pride in residents.

Identifying your local authenticity and what makes your destination "You-nique," understanding the heritage tourist, and exceeding their expectations with balance for residents and resources will create a positive experience for all.

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