

The Importance of The Religious Tourism Market

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Introduction. Religious tourism can be defined as travel with the core motive of experiencing religious forms, or the products they induce, like art, culture, traditions and architecture. Religious tourism is also called faith tourism. It is a type of tourism when people travel in groups or by themselves in order to visit places around the world which are considered to be holy by different religious.

Based upon the nature of the product, intensity and region of travel, Religious tourism is divided into the following major categories: pilgrimages, missionary travel, leisure (fellowship) vacations, faith-based cruising, crusades, conventions and rallies, retreats, monastery visits and guest-stays, faith-based camps, religious tourist attractions.

Faith tourism is one of the earliest forms of tourism. Religious travel and tourism has developed into a much larger and more segmented market. Today's religious travel includes multiple sub-niches that range from the luxury pilgrimage market to backpacking and from religious institutional travel to volunteer-oriented experiences meant to help those in some form of need. Religious tourism is not only a visitation to a particular holy destination, but may also be travel for a humanitarian cause, for reasons of friendship or even as a form of leisure. Religious travel can be the primary reason for a trip but it can also be part of a trip and provide a destination with additional attractions.

It is a mistake to think that only members of a particular religion come to a specific place of their interest. They, of course, form the majority of visitors, but lots of other people, who can just be interested in sightseeing, are sure to come as well.

Tourism acts as a crucial enabler in facilitating development of basic infrastructural facilities, generates income for the local community as well as the government, and fosters peace and socio-cultural harmony. However, tourism development in any region needs to be regulated to prevent negative impacts. Major problems include: waste management, air pollution, and monetizing religion are among the most common problems. Other issues relate to the management and promotion of religious destinations, the development of sustainable local economies and respect for the traditions and customs of the host populations.

Given its considerable demographic base, this form of tourism holds enormous potential for fostering interfaith and intercultural dialogue if it is harnessed. Indeed, if correctly conceived, tourism can be a tremendous development tool and an effective means of preserving and promoting cultural diversity. Part and parcel of this process is ensuring that such tourism remains sustainable, which means that it deals effectively with issues related to environmental, social and cultural conservation and preservation of local areas.

Pilgrimage routes and religious itineraries require well-coordinated partnerships and collaboration among all the host communities, tourism professionals and

territorial development authorities involved. That is a challenging task, which ensures the success of the development of the faith tourism.

Religious tourism is big business. In unstable economic times religious travel is often less prone to economic ups and downs. Because faith-based travelers are committed travelers they tend to save for these religious or spiritual experiences and travel despite the state of the economy. The religious travel boom now also means it is easier for tourists to research their trips and find a vacation suited to their exact needs.

Conclusion. All in all, the religious and faith based market has the advantage of appealing to people from around the world, of all ages and of all nationalities. This market will continue to grow.