A CLASSROOM LIKE NO OTHER
Learning and Teaching in Australian Educational Tourism
SUSAN BROOKMILL | TIM PITMAN | JOANNE MCEWAN

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SUPPORTED BY
An increasing number of Australians have time and income to spend on their leisure pursuits. Higher education and tourism providers are two potential beneficiaries of this phenomenon and are increasingly intertwined. A greater proportion of the travelling public is made up of participants who are seeking an educational experience as they travel. At the same time, educationalists – especially in the humanities – are teaching more students, both young and mature, who are well-travelled and familiar with the places and locations being studied.

Until now, however, the relationship between higher education and tourism (especially tour companies) has largely been a haphazard arrangement and the lifelong learning opportunities for both clients and academic participants significantly under-explored. Generating knowledge capital is critical to the on-going success of tour operators responding to a sophisticated consumer market. Increasingly, companies such as these turn to academics to provide intellectually rigorous material for this audience.
This booklet outlines some of the results from a two-year research project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council grant, entitled ‘Articulating Lifelong Learning in Tourism: Dialogue between humanities scholars and travel providers’. The project was designed to specifically address one of the then Carrick Institute’s strategic outcomes: “strategic approaches by higher education providers to increase recognition of the importance of teaching in higher education, both within institutions and within the wider community.” The project investigated how informal knowledge might be made explicit through educational tourism and whether it was possible for learning to be demonstrated (perhaps ultimately for the purposes of formal accreditation). Importantly, it also sought to explore how scholars participate in their own form of transformative learning through engagement with educational tours; that is, using their interactions in this domain as an opportunity for reflecting on their teaching practices. The project’s formal outputs include workshops, research papers, and the publicly accessible final report.

This booklet explores a range of issues related specifically to that aspect of the project exploring the practice of teaching and learning on educational tours, and is designed for academic scholars. It analyses definitions of educational tourism that are used in scholarly educational and tourism research as well as in the marketplace, and investigates the forms of learning that these imply. It then explores individual academics’ relationships with educational tourism and what roles they play as facilitators of learning. It analyses how educational tourism changes the way participant scholars teach both on-site and in the tertiary classroom as a result of their experiences in this sector. To this end, reflective statements collected during our research are included as case studies of diverse approaches to teaching in educational tourism from a range of academic practitioners in different contexts.
A CLASSROOM LIKE NO OTHER
LEARNING AND TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL TOURISM
The project adopted qualitative research methodologies. It also employed an action research methodology. Evaluation after each stage of data collection, analysis and communication was reflected in changes to the future data collection as well as to the dissemination of the project findings to stakeholders. Data was collected for analysis through a number of instruments and over a period of time. The collection of information and materials responded to analysis of previous data and the development of the research programme.

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM LITERATURE

Firstly, educational tour provider literature was assessed for concepts related to educational tourism, language regarding ideas of learning or teaching, and discussions of learning objectives, the educational qualifications of tour providers, leaders and designers, as they were expressed by tour companies when marketing to potential clients. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis was conducted on a range of publicly accessible forms of
documentation produced by educational tour companies. These texts included website material, advertising flyers and brochures, specific tour itineraries, and detailed tour handbooks.

CLIENT AND ACADEMIC SURVEYS

Two online surveys were then conducted. A “client survey” collected data from individuals who identified themselves as having had previous experience of educational tours or as being interested in doing so in the future. We identified past traveller participants through the tour companies and potential travellers through university lifelong learning departments, and from an open invitation on the travel/place website www.elsewhereonline.com.au. The project also surveyed a large cohort of academic scholars in Arts and Humanities fields in Australian universities about their understandings of educational tourism, how they thought about participation, what objectives companies might have in seeking academic engagement with their tours, what learning outcomes clients might hope for in this sphere, and finally what barriers they perceived to future participation in this form of teaching beyond the university classroom.

INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOLARS AND COMPANY PERSONNEL

In-depth interviews were conducted with key members of staff from educational tour operator organisations and a range of academic scholars from different disciplines, with varied educational tourism experiences. Personnel from five companies agreed to recorded interviews, including company directors, tour program developers, tour leaders, tour managers and trainers, operations managers, and marketing and sales staff. The scholars interviewed all worked within the broad disciplines of arts and humanities. Some had extensive experience as tour leaders, program designers or course
material designers, while others had some experience of organising study tours and volunteer tourism for university students. Finally, some academic scholars were interviewed as interested future leaders.

**SCHOLARS AND DIRECTORS WORKSHOP**

In the next phase of the research, scholarly and industry attendees participated in a full-day workshop. The workshop aimed to identify ways to overcome perceived challenges to academic engagement, to recognise the value of scholarly teaching in this context, and also to articulate how academics could use this domain to support their own research and learning.

**REFLECTIVE STATEMENTS**

Finally, a series of academic scholars both in Australia and abroad who interacted with Australian tour companies were invited to compose reflective statements that responded to a series of targeted questions. These questions were designed to focus more explicitly on aspects of the learning process created by the format and content of educational tours, which they identified both for participants and for themselves. Their responses are provided here.
When surveyed, many academic scholars within Australian universities indicated that they had experienced teaching in forms of educational tourism. This included acting as leaders or hosts of inbound programs, roles as fieldwork and excavation supervisors, providing touring advice to students and colleagues, delivering public lecture series in regional areas, and facilitating student exchanges. Indeed, Australian universities act as service providers of tourism experiences by offering a wide variety of short programs, often fee-paying, with the express aim of combining learning and travel. Such travel options extend from study abroad and student exchange to group study tours, field work at various Australian locations, holiday programs and customised short courses designed
upon demand. Although such programs are marketed on their leisure aspects and include a range of entertainment activities, their focus is generally educational.

The majority of these programs target existing and prospective students of the university, especially prospective international students. Many universities also offer courses aimed at new international students. While some of these programs advertise their intention as familiarising students with their new surrounds and fellow classmates, the majority also seek to offer a learning experience by introducing students to, and immersing them in, Australian culture. A common thread running through advertisements for all of these ‘study + travel’ options, whether they are run in Australia or internationally, is the promise of a beneficial cultural experience.

Most of the travel options advertised by Australian universities are designed for students and potential students of the university. However, travel opportunities are occasionally extended to interested members of the public. This can take the form of short field trips to places of historical or cultural significance. Archaeology departments in particular sometimes offer their standard fieldwork schools and workshops to non-enrolled members of the public as short courses.

Notably, all of the Australian universities offer study abroad and student exchange programs, whereby students can study for up to a year abroad at a host institution whilst gaining credit towards their degree at home. Recommended study packages are often available for incoming study abroad students, many of which emphasise further opportunities to combine travel and learning via fieldwork, excursions and encounters with sites of Australian culture or heritage. Students can incorporate field trips to the Great Barrier Reef or famous shipwrecks for example, by choosing particular subjects as part of their study program.
A number of Australian universities also maintain collaborative links with partner institutions or research networks, with a particular focus on facilitating exchanges and short-term study options for students in overseas locations. In contrast to exchange programs, which send students to a different institution, a number of Australian universities also conduct study tours run by their own staff at overseas locations during university holiday periods. These vary from study tours that visit a foreign city with the purpose of studying its culture and politics, to those that deliver specific academic units as intensive short courses taught on location.

In addition to these types of for-credit and fee-paying learning experiences provided by universities, a number of higher education institutions provide opportunities for enrolled students, alumni and interested members of the public to participate in for-credit study tours, by working in association with commercial tour companies. Moreover, educational travel companies also liaise with individual academics to lead tour groups or provide content for handbooks and supporting materials. This project specifically engages with those educational tourism interactions that occur between universities and industry bodies, and this is the focus of the analysis to follow. In these instances, marketing and practice of such experiences promote learning and travel aspects in relationships of varied proportions.
Educational tourism providers do not generally refer to their activities as tours and the participants as tourists. Generally within the travel provider literature terms such as “travel,” “journey” or “adventure” were preferred – seemingly as a broader, more intellectual and less explicitly commercial definition of their practices. One brochure used a quote from a participant: “The program contained a good mix of information and activities meaning that I felt like a traveller rather than a tourist.”

The description of tours emphasised the provision of more detailed information and cultural engagement than was possible in “mass tourism”. Suitable clients were identified as those who had a

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

A TERM THAT IMPLIES AN ORGANISED TOUR AND REFLECTS THE COMMERCIAL PROVISION OF THESE EXPERIENCES.
desire to have “greater involvement in another culture, than merely observing it from a coach window,” and were “those who want more out of travel than simply a catalogue of places.” Features of the tours therefore included “extended stays” to “get to know the places you visit.” Mass tourism was portrayed either as the absent other against which comparisons were made, or through phrases which critiqued other modes of touristic engagement:

*Spend your time actually looking at the things you’ve travelled to see, rather than straining to listen to a local tour guide. Through the background talks you’ll also build up a coherent understanding of the country you’re visiting, not just a fragmented set of facts.*

These statements expressed the sector’s definition of itself as offering an intentionally richer understanding of places or cultures. An employee in one educational tour company described his company’s niche learning approach in the following terms:

*It gives tourists an opportunity to step outside the regular old box of a tourism experience and gives them an insight into educational aspects and certainly would … develop knowledge and satisfaction of visiting a destination instead of just seeing the elementary sights and sounds.*

A number of scholars saw tourism as a limited or limiting term. As one male academic and tour leader argued: “by using the word tourism, you’re limiting yourself to one part of the phenomenon. If you use the word[s] “educational travel”, you would be widening that.” Another explained:

*There is also, almost a contradiction in terms: educational tourism, isn’t there? Because tourism often necessitates a sort of blinkered view of the world, what I call cocooned existence. We’ve all seen tourist buses with people who seek to stay within their comfort zone… You’re in a bus, you’re in a nice hotel, you don’t have to learn the language.*
Yet the same academic concluded his response by reconciling the possibilities of learning within this commodified genre:

*I think educational tourism, if it’s to be packaged as a commodity, is tourism with a particular focus and the focus is to engage with aspects of the place where you are touring. In other words, it’s beyond looking.*

For the following phases of the research, we elected to keep the term “educational tourism” in order to make the direct connection to the format of the educational experience we were most commonly analysing in this study – both in the sense that it concerns the organised tour, and to reflect the fact that these are commercial operations.
Some scholars perceived the use of the term “tourism” to be problematic or conceptually incompatible with education. Several proposed negative definitions of educational tourism, centring on either the quality of the learning experience or a belief that tourism itself was negative:

*Sounds a bit sus. The exploitation by the tourist industry of peoples better instincts toward the planet.* (female academic, aged 50-65)

*A marketing ploy.* (male academic, aged 18-35)

Some scholars critiqued tourism as an exploitative mode of encounter:

*The idea of “tourism” has negative connotations for me; it signifies to me a type of intrusion. I realise that some places rely upon tourism economically, but I feel suspicious about claims made about the type of learning that can occur as a tourist.* (female academic, aged 35-50)
I don’t think mediated encounters with living people or places that are pre-defined as “other” will conduce to those peoples’ or places’ welfare. (female academic, aged 18-35)

This perception has been noted in scholarly literature as the “paradox of tourism”.

The more cultural capital the travel consumer wields and accrues (through tourism), and the deeper her belief in travel’s potential to inform and transform, the more deep-seated her prejudice against tourism as a “bad cultural object” is likely to be. For such consumers, tourism is a byword for superficiality, inauthenticity, willful ignorance, political irresponsibility, exploitation, and cultural prostitution. Werry (2008, p.14)

Many clients, however, identified educational tourism as a forum in which they could share a commitment to learn, but also one which encompassed a range of shared ethical values. Clients desired qualities in a tour leader such as “Sensitivity to others – both on the tour and locals in the areas visited,” and

Interpersonal relationship qualities, an understanding of diversity, … ability to connect with the local environment and people and show you the other side of the place you are visiting and introduce you to the people that you wouldn’t meet.

Many academics defined educational tourism as offering positive benefits to travellers and local communities:

It is not just the traveller who will benefit from the encounters and experiences during the travel but the people who come in contact with the traveller. In other words, the benefits are reciprocal. (female academic, 35-50)
Clients offered definitions of educational tourism such as:

Offering the tourist a guided tour in which emphasis is placed not just on the beauty and wonder of the environment but also on its fragility and how we might protect it. This would involve learning about wider issues such as excessive population growth, depletion of resources and study of cultures ranging from relatively benign to outright destructive. (male client, aged over 75)

Giving something back to the communities of the countries that we visit. Socially and environmentally responsible travel. (female client, aged 35-50)

Ideally it demonstrates great respect for the people who live in the place and their environment eg by them owning the tour company, being specialist guides etc. It involves a relationship. Not just looking at people. (client, aged 50-65)

Educational tourism was perceived to provide an opportunity for individuals – both scholars and clients – to immerse themselves in context-specific experiences that examined ethical and moral issues, particularly those arising from interactions with people from different countries, religions, cultures and socio-economic groups. Educational tour participants of all kinds were primarily motivated by a desire to encounter cultures and be ethical in their resulting interactions.

CLIENTS PERCEIVE AND DESIRE EDUCATIONAL TOURISM TO BE AN ETHICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE FORM OF TOURISM.
Some participants and academic leaders suggested that educational tourism could be a form of tourism whose mission was to be sustainable and ethical. In terms of tour content, many clients desired facets beyond discrete disciplinary knowledge, such as a more nuanced social understanding of other cultures:

*It means seeing things you don’t see at home. Learning things you don’t learn at home. It also means talking to people and trying to understand what they think about issues and what they think about us.* (female client, aged 65-75)

*Sustainability measures and strategies of the locality, Welfare of people in the locality, Anything forward looking to the future.* (female client, aged 50-65)

Many academics also defined educational tourism as providing learning precisely through interaction with local communities:

*Authentic interaction with locals; rural environments (the village not just the natural world).* (female academic, aged 35-50)

*Direct interaction with ‘ordinary’ people in the designated areas.* (male academic, aged 50-65)
Learning was unmistakably the dominant outcome of educational tourism defined by clients, academics and operators. Provider literature identified enquiry as a key differentiating point of its niche in the tourism market: from the passive “audience interested in travelling to learn,” to the more dynamic “enquiring minds” which focus on “stimulating … the active, inquisitive traveller.”

Learning in educational tourism is defined by three key ideas:

**INTENTIONAL** “Taking a trip specifically to broaden my horizons or enhance my knowledge.” (male client, aged 18-35); “Travel with a purpose; an enriched travel experience that provides food for your brain.” (female client, aged 56-65)

**EXPERIENTIAL** “immersion”, “hands-on”, “vivid” and “evidence”, “engaging with ideas in their original context” and “being exposed to politics, society and economy.”

**STRUCTURED** “It is the combination of travel with a structured educational program.” (male academic, aged 50-65); “Going overseas to learn something in a structured way.” (female client, aged 35-50)

A content developer at one company noted the importance of structure: “the experience that people are paying for is something quite unique, and something they most certainly couldn’t achieve on their own.” Academics defined the provision of an explicit
structure to pursue learning as the significant feature of educational tourism. One academic tour leader expressed it as: “Tourism, or travel which is structured, has a theme to pursue and requires some background knowledge of the sites being visited and some attempt to analyse on the spot.” Scholars emphasised the intention of clients to learn on such tours as an important definitional feature of educational tours.

Explicit academic connections matter to educational tour company marketing. Provider literature, such as tour programs and brochures, make the academic qualifications of their personnel clear. The previous teaching appointments of employees at secondary and tertiary level, from directors and office staff to tour leaders, were typically provided in website and brochure literature. The use of tertiary scholars as leaders was frequently noted in addition to other forms of expertise (although how this would be identified was unspecified): “led by academics or experts in the focus of the tour.” Companies defined their tourism niche therefore as one which is engaged with academic or other expertise.

Importantly, one marketing manager in an educational tourism company saw the involvement of academics and experts as crucial in the distinction of their company from other tourism providers: “we believe educational tourism is having group leaders that know more about the place and can put it into a sense of its era and the perspective of where it’s come from.” One experienced male tour leader reflected that it was the careful structure, unique

| PARTICIPATION BY ACADEMICS IS HIGHLY VALUED BY EDUCATIONAL TOUR COMPANIES AND CLIENTS. |
locations, as well as the expertise of the leader that attracted clients: “because you have worked there for 35 years and also because you are a professional.” He reflected on feedback from tour participants that indicated:

They want to be informed by someone that they think they trust knows the material. And I think that’s the reason they look at them and say okay, this person’s worked there that long, they lecture at this university so we can rely upon what they say.

A well-qualified tour leader was clearly an important part of educational tour marketing. Travel company literature emphasised the care and consideration of tour groups in “sourcing” an appropriately trained program leader.

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CUTTING-EDGE KNOWLEDGE CONTENT CREATED BY ACADEMICS CREATES A MARKETABLE EDUCATIONAL TOUR.
BEING THERE: Dr John Wreglesworth, Independent Scholar

More than thirty years of leading tours to some of the world’s most significant artistic sites have convinced me of one simple truth: cultural understanding is enhanced by personal experience. The path of historical awareness leads from archives and libraries. But it is formed and shaped by much more than the written word. The past has left a beguiling, rich, varied and, above all, visible legacy for the present. Through historical art, architecture and artefacts, we can explore long-lost worlds through direct contact. Such physical remains are a type of illumination for our cultural landscape so that the past is given a particular context by place. Educational tourism and site visits are a means to understand mankind’s story. Besides which, they are wonderful vehicles for a personal journey, through history and geography, in the company of other interested travellers.

Despite the passage of rather more years than is seemly to count since my attendance at St. Charles R.C. Junior School, I still remain grateful to inspirational teachers who broke through the psychological walls around a small mining town and showed me a wider world of possibilities. The teaching of Misses Connolly and Schofield, especially, went beyond the simply utilitarian (although I still feel reasonably comfortable in the mathematical company of decimals and fractions). Thanks to their skills, I retain an interest in the coffee-producing fazendas of Brazil and the workings of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Above all, my they transported me through time as well as space. It was only in the mind’s eye of a child but, thanks to my teachers, I debated with Socrates on the Acropolis, followed Julius Caesar into the Roman forum and stood guard on the wind-swept battlements of the great crusader castle of Krak des Chevaliers in Syria. Even then, I knew that these were places, with many others, that I wanted, or needed, to see in person.

The time and opportunity to explore widely came with study as an undergraduate. If the opportunity to visit the Snowy Mountains still remained financially elusive, there was an extraordinary, and inexhaustible, treasure trove of sites places closer to hand in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Neither swarms of fellow visitors in Athens and Rome nor a highly idiosyncratic guide in Syria could diminish the pleasure of transforming the long-imagined into reality. With a thickening wallet, and, indeed, waistline, I have been able to journey farther afield to have a direct experience of places, both famous and obscure, that have shaped my understanding of the world. There is still much to do and see.
As a postgraduate student I benefited from visiting those places in northern Spain that I studied, connecting object to text and relating site to setting. Traversing ancient battlefields and lonely pilgrim routes or encountering simple chapels and ruinous castles’ fostered an appreciation for time and place that has supplemented, and, on occasions, corrected information transmitted by the written word. Even now, although occasionally I feel as ancient as the manuscripts I study, there is still a visceral pleasure to be drawn from turning the parchment leaves of a medieval book, marvelling at the legibility of a centuries-old document and luxuriating in the spendour of its illustrations. Despite familiarity, I am still awed by an encounter with historical buildings, whether modest pre-romanesque churches in northern Spain or imposing Muslim palaces in Andalusia.

When teaching or lecturing, I have tried to enhance the learning process by taking it beyond the classroom. One winter’s afternoon I supervised the attempted defence of a genuine hill-fort by one group of students, the Celts, against an assault by other students, ‘Romans’. As the would-be ‘ legionaries’ struggled up steep banks, protected by pieces of cardboard in a fair replica of the classic ‘tortoise’ formation, they were peppered with snowballs by the desperate defenders. It was a fun afternoon but one that sparked a thoughtful discussion among the participants on the tactics and techniques of classical warfare. Most memorably, while teaching a course on Russian revolutions, I led a group of students to Moscow and St. Petersburg. Their response to the majesty of the Kremlin and the elegance of the Winter Palace was a more direct engagement with the subject, greater interest and, for some, better examination grades. The whole experience even transformed one particularly shy and reticent youth into a star of the church-group speaking circuit, according to his father, a local vicar.

For the past ten years, I have conducted cultural tours throughout Europe. While this has ended the academic drudgery of marking scripts, the calibre of the clients has ensured the need for detailed preparation. Some are latter-day Marco Polos who, formerly, crossed Asia by camper-van or toured Franco’s Spain by mini-car. The majority are highly educated, representing all professions – and none. What unites these groups is the intelligence of their members and the consequent capacity to ask searching questions about what is being seen. Some explore well-covered intellectual territory but others lead us off in new and surprising directions that may challenge orthodoxies or, at least for me, cast a different light upon them. For a guide or lecturer, to approach the familiar through the responses of those
encountering it for the first time is a stimulating opportunity for re-evaluation. At their best, the tours almost form a continuous seminar benefiting from the group’s knowledge and experience, as when, for instance, in Madrid, a distinguished medical consultant enhanced understanding of the Velázquez masterpiece, Las Meninas, by explaining the physical disabilities of figures portrayed in the canvas.

There is no substitute, either as scholar or traveller, for seeing places, entering buildings or examining art in all of its forms. And yet seeing is not the same as understanding. Da Vinci’s ‘Mona Lisa’, masterwork though it is, has been known to generate an ‘Is that all?’ response from some viewers who perhaps expected a larger and more imposing portrait. The pleasure of presence, bringing a personal response, ought to be enhanced by an informed explanation, with the development of context. As a scholar and traveller, I have derived much benefit and pleasure from forming a connection with place. As a guide/lecturer, I have tried to reveal and share this association. Percy Shelley’s celebrated poem ‘Ozymandias’ begins, ‘I met a traveller from an antique land’ who described the mighty statue of Ozymandias, now lying ruined in the desert sands, with the moral of the great king’s foolish pride clear to the audience. How much more satisfying to have been the traveller who saw the colossal wreck at first-hand rather than the listener who only knew it from the lips of another person.
Overwhelmingly, both academic and client respondents defined a conscious or deliberate learning component as part of this kind of travel. As seen above, explicit references to the provision of an educational component, in-depth information, cultural contact, and mental stimulation are central to the marketing strategies of educational tour organisations. Several companies indicated that their tours could be claimed as professional development or used for academic credit.

However, the generally accessible educational tours are typically designed for the satisfaction of individuals rather than to meet professional or scholarly requirements. “Experience”, “explore”, “discover” are the key descriptors of the educational experience within company literature. “Learning” is not commonly used and is often replaced by less directed (and less quantifiable) verbs such as “enquiring”.

In general, the learning described is implicitly about personal development rather than testable information. Companies emphasise that no specific academic qualifications are necessary to participate in a tour – rather, what is needed is a willingness to
explore another culture in detail. Attitude rather than qualifications is thus a key requirement for clients. The degree of knowledge attainment is up to the individual, with phrases such as “broadening your knowledge” conveying a sense that learning is measurable only at the level of each participant. Educational tours contribute to a participant’s personal and intellectual lifelong learning. Because of the individual nature of the learning, and the need to avoid quantifiable knowledge outcomes that cannot be guaranteed for each participant, there is in general no attempt to provide specific learning outcomes for an individual tour.

With educational tours, company personnel insist that learning must be achieved in an enjoyable way. The director of one educational tour company described the learning that they provide in the following way: “what we’re about is continuing education, lifelong learning. So it’s about learning for fun without examinations attached.” Another tour designer articulated that for her company:

_We do think of them as educational experiences because they do come away from it having learnt something and having very special experiences that I think helped aid their learning and . . . the sort of experiences that we provide really enhance their whole travel experience._

Academic scholars produce a range of materials and literature for educational tours. Some academics placed a high value on the need for preparation as a key component of the structured learning experience inherent in educational tourism:

_Educational tourism is not an incidental element of a touristic experience but is rather programmatic: that is it is structured learning in which the learning is the purpose of travel rather than a possible outcome. This means that the travel is supported in some way. In many cases, this may be a formal activity, but some formal ‘teaching’ arrangement is not a pre-condition of educational tourism. Rather, educational tourism involves a degree_
of preparation for the experience in order to develop tourism into learning. Many learning opportunities during tourism go unnoticed because the tourist does not know what it is s/he is experiencing or could be experiencing in a particular locality. (male academic, aged 35-50)

Prior information, such as handouts, books, and other educational aids, is highly valued by clients. Significantly, the project surveys suggest that aids ‘retain’ their educational value, even after the tour has concluded. Maps, handbooks and even novels were rated by participants as a useful learning tool at all stages of the educational tourism experience.
Dr Judit Zerkowitz, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Before answering your questions let me tell you that in the last ten or so years I have met each September groups who visited Central European countries that used to belong to the Hapsburg Empire. I talked to them about Hungarian literature. I had a core theme: nostalgia for the years of peace, fear of war and totalitarianism as reflected in literature.

Each year I bring in new things, such as one year I talked about the Australian-Hungarian writer’s Riemer’s view of re-visiting the old country, the Habsburg café, another year socialist realism versus post-modernism in our literature, then the baroque style, we had a Nobel prize winner, so that year we talked about Kertész. The groups always bring up topics, like moving from state sponsorship to market forces in publishing, the effect of the Internet on the reading habits of young Hungarians. Often there are individuals whose parents or themselves come from this region and they have very interesting questions, comments. Because the first groups have been so friendly, open, outgoing and interested after a few years I realised that I’d like to invite the group to my place to show them my little collection of Hungarian books in English translation and also for them to see the home of a local person. So I offer them the choice of either me going to their hotel or their coming over. Three groups have visited me already. And one word about their group leaders. I have rarely met such fantastic scholars and kind people as them. They have enormous knowledge, academic background and empathy, humour, it is always a privilege to meet them. Well, you may wonder about the tone of my report, I must add that I do not enthuse like this all the time. Okay, now I’ll try to answer the questions.

1. How did the form of the study tours help participants to learn?

A THEME is devised that fits the region. Being on the SPOT and meeting local experts and ordinary people face to face, breathing the air, make the participants take in impressions through all the senses. Being able to DIALOGUE they can openly discuss if their expectations, presuppositions, clash or are confirmed by what they see and hear. In a GROUP there always are different people, yet a general group spirit will be generated somehow and like a human being it will develop as they react individually and as a group to what they learn.
2. How do you feel learning in place differs from campus education?

Like potted plant and garden variety, laboratory and life. After reading plenty at school about the Lakes District, was I moved when I could walk where the Wordsworths walked and hear how people talk there? Or, having studied Dickens, follow a guide round in the Doughty Street house in London, which is now a museum? What I find excellent is that the Australian study tours are real study tours, the participants attend the lectures, ask questions, comment, show involvement, and express interest.

3. How did having to teach this way make you think differently about your subject?

Well, I found the questions they raised illuminating. We are now getting used to capitalism after state-controlled socialism. I am still more interested in the canon than in popular fiction, more interested in what I think would be good rather than what is happening. The groups inquired about sales, what sorts of books sell well, if there is a gypsy literature and reading public, what young people like to read, why most texts they meet here are sad, grotesque, acrid, urban, if anything goes that sells, what do we have in common with the literatures in the region, what do we know about Australian literature? My students stick to the texts, facts, theories, with them literature is a subject. With Australians the sociology of reading, the finance of publishing and disseminating books, the moral message seemed to me to be in the centre.

4. How does serendipitous experience affect your mentalité as a scholar?

Unfortunately literary criticism and literature teaching can become autotelic, meaning the original literary text is relegated into the background, and what gets discussed is theory, politics, social history. Talking to the Australian group one has to stick to the actual poem, play, prose, rather than talk for the umpteenth time about a theory or philological quirk. We have to convey the pre-critical appreciation, joy, pleasure and intellectual challenge of reading texts that come from another culture.
Many academics indicated that they had already been involved in educational tourism. More than a quarter (26.8%) had participated as either a guest lecturer or a tour leader. A sizeable proportion had also presented information sessions or authored educational tourism materials. Other forms of educational tourism experiences listed by scholars included contributing as program coordinators; as lecturers in a course with tourism-related material; giving adult extension or community courses on travel-related topics; lecturing on study (credit) tours and as participants themselves. The overwhelming majority found the experience valuable and would participate again in some teaching aspect.

Academic engagement as knowledge experts was perceived to add value to educational tours, not just by companies and their clients but also by scholars. One male academic reflected:

*There’s an onus upon us to put that back… into the community. But I think there’s a lot of people in the community who are really interested in this so it’s not like oh well, we have to do this. I think there are people out there, lots of people, who are interested in all sorts of things.*
Excellent communication skills and delivery techniques were considered critical aspects of a tour leader’s teaching competencies by all of the survey groups:

*Good at communication i.e. also in eye contact and rapport with people. They don’t sound like they are bored and have said the thing a 1000 times, but genuinely interested in what they do, teach.* (female client, aged 35-50)

This passion to communicate knowledge defined an excellent tour leader, as the director of one educational tour company observed:

*Somebody who is deeply involved, intimately involved with the country or the theme of a particular tour, who can share that enthusiasm with others but who also has an empathy for travellers who may not be experienced.*

As an academic explained, “many of those skills will overlap with the skills required of a good teacher, and the essence of good teaching is a combination of knowledge, ability to communicate, and passion.” These qualities marked those who were “the best in their field.” An employee of one company commented:

*the knowledge of their subject, their confidence in their subject… They have to be able to impart the knowledge to their clients in a way that people are going to appreciate while they’re away.*

Scholars spoke of their “passion” for their subjects and “love” for the places they visited with tour groups; indeed one scholar considered that leaders were often showing tour participants “their favourite places.”

To cater for the range of skills required in tour leaders, some companies have created a division between an organiser/manager role and the accompanying expert. This is in addition to the on-site guides who might also be provided. However, it is notable
that the social aspects of group cohesion and dynamics (if not practical arrangements) are seen as the role of the intellectual expert. One academic leader described his input as the leader on a photography tour in the following terms: “I was there as a kind of creative mentor, I suppose, that is the term that I like to use. And that worked very well.”

Leaders were commonly defined as flexible thinkers. When asked to consider how they delivered content on tours, leaders’ responses consistently highlighted the key characteristic as adaptability:

_We are flexible in that we will ask people on the group that we take at the moment, what are you interested in? What would you like us to talk about? We have got a series of topics that we think you should get information on, but if you have particular components, let us know._

Leaders spoke of the need to be sensitive to the different ways and environments in which learning occurred:

_The experience of good teaching is to be mindful of what people are bringing to the classroom and to make sure that in the discourse we have some are not being alienated by only talking to others._

The importance of observing the variety of learning styles and levels in a tour group was noted by one female academic leader: “several of them will be taking notes. And with some of them they will also come up to you later and ask for clarification of certain of the points that you’ve made.” The opportunity to pose questions to the tour leader was highlighted by many leaders as a common feature of participant learning. One brochure, for example, quoted a participant: “I found the lectures on culture and history excellent & informative. Good to have opportunities to ask questions.” This suggests that beyond the formal delivery of lectures, an important aspect of client learning takes place in informal settings. These may be places where the participants feel comfortable and supported,
unafraid to ask questions, to verify their learning or to reflect upon the sites visited and their meanings.

In addition to the challenge of clients’ differing levels of subject familiarity, learning styles, and abilities, catering to different degrees of interest in learning is a critical feature for most leaders. Scholars described their method for responding to different learning styles and degrees of prior knowledge thus:

*while we do start up with a generalised kind of thing, you know that not everyone will perhaps want to walk down that path of more detailed or more specific knowledge that’s what those before departure or before evening meal sessions are for . . . equally of course as a tour leader you’re available for discussions whenever people want. . . . what I will do is walk on the bus and talk and then sit with people.*

*I prepare comprehensive notes for myself which I take and then you really play it by ear . . . If they’re particularly interested sometimes we will have a meeting in the evening. If they initialise it. I don’t organise that. If they say, “We’d like to learn more about this.” I say, “Okay let’s get together after dinner.”*

As these examples suggest, tour leaders’ skills include not just knowledge expertise but also critical social skills in detecting levels of engagement and responding appropriately to them. Academics noted that teaching on tour exposed them to a ‘less controlled’ environment where they had to react and adapt to client needs, and that these experiences pushed them out of their comfort zones in positive ways.
In January 2005 I taught a 2nd/3rd-year Art History travel course focused on ancient Roman art and architecture, accredited by La Trobe University as part of a BA degree. The course was held on site in Rome, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis, Ostia Antica and Paestum. Australians Studying Abroad organized all the travel arrangements, and also provided funds for a tutor, Dr Julia Kelly. Before setting out, students were assigned three main tasks: before leaving Melbourne to research and write a short paper on a specific work of art and to deliver the paper on site in a gallery or museum beside the work in question; to write a longer essay on an aspect of Roman art or architecture, to be handed in a month after they returned to Melbourne; and to keep a travel diary, to be read by their tutor/lecturer on their return. They also took numerous photographs, which they shared at a social gathering after our return.

1. How did the form of the study tours help participants to learn?

Participants found the exposure to real works of art (rather than illustrations or slides) very engaging. Their photographs and comments provided clear evidence of this. Being on site stimulated their interest and raised questions, which helped to shape their research. Often there was lively discussion, occasioned by the sight and experience of the works. With regard to architecture and sculpture, students were able to appreciate the physical dimensions and visual impact of ancient buildings and statues in ways that are not possible in a library or classroom. Although marvelous virtual recreations and moving images have been made of such works, there is something special about experiencing them in situ, which enhanced the students’ appreciation of them. When the students returned to Melbourne and wrote the long essay, they were working on a theme whose content and conceptual framework had been discussed with the lecturer and tutor during the time abroad, and then researched when they came home. Seeing various art objects aroused their curiosity during the tour, and formed the starting point for intensive reading, research and writing after their return.
2. How do you feel learning in place differs from campus education?

Experiencing monuments and works of art is different from reading about them. With a vast quantity of Roman artifacts on view, in six major museums, students were able to see a wide range of Greco-Roman artworks. There was a sense of actually being in the Roman past at towns like Pompeii, Herculaneum and Ostia Antica, which could not have come from a lecture, a film, or a book.

On the other hand, in teaching with visual resources such as slides and electronic images, it is possible to make comparisons between monuments and objects that are situated in very different places, like North Africa and Greece, whereas on site one can only view what is actually there. Moreover, to analyze some buildings, it was necessary to take architectural drawings, and sometimes maps, to explain the plan, elevation and function of the edifice.

3. How did having to teach this way make you think differently about your subject?

When teaching on site, one often perceives monuments and artworks from novel points of view. One becomes aware of more details and correlations. In a museum or gallery one can see many works of art that are not often illustrated in books and that sometimes clarify the meaning of better-known examples. Sometimes seeing objects in their original context makes their significance more palpable. In these ways travel makes a difference to the way one views one’s subject.

4. How do you relate text to experience? How does experience make you read text differently?

Texts help us to understand works of art and architecture. One of the problems of teaching on an educational travel tour is the lack of texts on hand for reading and study, since students can take only a limited number of books with them and often it is not possible to access a good library. It seemed necessary therefore to insist on preliminary reading before setting out, and to require a longer essay after the tour to enable students to read more deeply on their topic of interest. A selection of excerpts from classical literature in translation was also gathered into a portable handbook, to enliven the experience of learning about ancient Rome.
5. How does serendipitous experience affect your mentalité as a scholar?

As a scholar, one needs to be open to inspiration, which comes in many ways. In travel sometimes the sight of an edifice or work of art may illuminate some aspect of its meaning, not noticed in learned commentaries. Such insights, and discussing art with experts in the field overseas, can lead to a change in a scholar’s mentalité.
Being ‘on-site’ was seen for many to provide distinct pedagogical insights, both for clients and for academic scholars as well. The delivery required and the value of being in place were articulated by one academic tour leader as follows: “there is a different dynamic and you can draw on that shared experience without having to spell it out.” Another observed that it was unlike classroom lectures because of the immediacy of the content:

> Depending on what we’ve seen that day, they may be more focused perhaps on what they’ve just seen. For instance … you know what XYZ looked like, you’ve just been down it, therefore you can visualise it. So there’s a difference.

A number of academic tour leaders highlighted overlap between their work in the institution and beyond. One academic observed that “a lot of what I do is taken straight out of what I do in lectures [within the institution]. And then a lot goes back in to the lectures afterwards.” The variety of the teaching environments on a tour was a feature that attracted some leaders. As one academic explained: “[it’s] always intriguing, trying to teach in different places, in different contexts, in different ways. I think teaching in universities is… well, it’s the same, rather repetitive.”
The influence that being in place has on the production of new knowledge cannot be underestimated, according to tour leaders. As academics observed:

*The impact of it – there in person – stays in your memory very much better. You can see it in context, explain better how something got there, which really can’t happen on a page in a book.*

*Doing it in situ, absolutely there are things that you can teach only when you are there. It’s partly indescribable, just the sense of place… that you can’t convey in the classroom. There’s also an intensity to the teaching.*

Experiential learning, being in the moment, could be for many a powerful tool. Academics noted that educational tourism had the advantage of offering serendipitous learning moments: the tour group experiencing events that were unforeseen and which a good tour leader could turn to their advantage.

Moreover, because teaching on tour is less linear than classroom teaching, new ways of delivering ideas are required. The relative flexibility in designing a syllabus free from university course structures and assessment requirements enables some scholars to explore new materials and experiment with more interdisciplinary programs than they can in classroom units. Academics considered that teaching on tour required an ability to synthesise large amounts of information, across varied disciplines, in ways that were not comparable to delivery of unit content in the tertiary classroom.

Equally, clients valued tour leaders who were able to “synthesize a great deal of learning and communicate it in a way, which conveys a great deal of insight into the subject matter, while remaining clearly understandable.” Several academics stressed the ways in which educational tourism had enhanced their ability to create narrative, or to “tell a story”. By delivering on tours, academics considered that tour leaders were able to develop more discursive learning styles.
TEACHING AND LEARNING ‘HISTORY ON THE SPOT’ IN EUROPE:  
A REFLECTION  
Professor Charles Zika, University of Melbourne

The most satisfying and also stimulating teaching experiences I have had during my almost thirty five years at University have undoubtedly been teaching an overseas intensive subject on five different occasions over the last ten years. From regular informal reports and also from the anonymous student evaluations of these subjects, a large percentage of students felt the same. Many found their experience of learning in these subjects the most exciting and engaging of their university degrees, and even in some cases, life-transforming in their impact. Learning to them (and me) was experienced as more immediate, more real, more challenging; and the heightened level of engagement stimulated them to pursue issues with considerably more energy and zeal than is generally the case on campus. This was also borne out in the high quality of written work they submitted at the end of the subject.

To make my comments on this learning and teaching experience more intelligible, it’s useful if I first describe briefly what form this subject took, for it is likely to differ from the teaching and learning adopted in many other study tours. The history subject I taught was part of a BA program, extending over approximately four weeks. It was primarily directed at training students in the broad craft of history, which included learning how to read a particular past (that of Central Europe during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries) through particular objects, spaces and lives. The teaching mode was intensive, with a time requirement equivalent, at minimum, to the number of contact hours students would spend in two complete full semester units (60 hours); and after the return to Melbourne, students would complete the written assessment required, equivalent again to that in two semester subjects. Approximately 27% of the face-to-face teaching time in Europe was made up by lectures, 40% by specific lecture and tutorial discussion topics held in both formal and informal institutional and excursion settings, and 33% by more informal learning during excursions. But for most students (and teachers) there were many more hours of study, spent in preparatory reading, for instance, as well as in discussions at breakfast and dinner, in pubs and cafes, on trams and trains.

The subject included stays of 2-3 days in one or two different cities (Vienna & Prague), and then approximately three weeks
in the one location (the German city of Nuremberg), with four additional full-day and two half-day excursions to cities and towns in the immediate region, each trip involving 1-4 hours of travel on the particular day. So while the experience of some locations was limited to one day and even one visit, in other cases students visited particular historical locations two, three, five, six, or even more times in the city of Nuremberg, and they would do so alone as well as in small groups. Throughout the month the students were also required to complete reading in preparation for lectures and tutorials (available to them in a reader), equivalent in volume to what they would complete over two semester units on campus in Melbourne. And they kept a diary as part of assessment requirements, as well as completing one small exercise before departing Europe.

An immensely satisfying aspect of this teaching was to experience students digesting and synthesising a broad range of materials so quickly and so keenly. Because of the repeated and sometimes daily experience of particular aspects of the city, the accumulated data was not so easily forgotten, as it so often is in a weekly timetable on campus; but it was reinforced, reworked and slowly retained. Satisfaction for me as a teacher was very high. One could see the learning process so clearly at work and so too the palpable delight of many students in the common "aha experience", as they detected parallel themes in fountains, buildings, sculptures, manuscripts and paintings, as social and political relationships were reiterated through the organisation of urban space, or as the fates of marginal groups such as Jews were uncovered from the layers of history which attempted to bury their presence and memory. The strong sense of physical place, the sensual experience of location and situated object, perhaps also the fact that learning in this case occurred more frequently in a group, allowed for a more intense historical experience and facilitated the synthesis of a range of quite diverse material.

The visual, spatial, topographical and architectural experience of doing 'history on the spot' provided a sensory experience of learning and an immediacy far more difficult to achieve through the written word of a book or journal article read at a distance. The experience of cobbled streets and clustered housing, for instance, allowed some of the realities of a more face to face society to be immediately appreciated.

The clustering of the oldest craftsmen's houses immediately beneath the castle spoke clearly of the community's origins and development, as the ring of patrician houses around market squares demonstrated the oligarchic, mercantile ruling class.
The experience of the fourteenth-century church of Our Lady on the very site of the earlier Jewish synagogue, and on the edge of a market square which received imperial privileges immediately after it had been destroyed in a pogrom, communicated to students quickly and graphically the complex relationship between imperial power, urban growth and religious ideology in late medieval Europe, even if the details of how and why those synergies had developed can only have been discovered through reading and study. In a similar fashion, walking the so-called executioners’ walk to his residence situated on a bridge over the river, in order to ensure his presence did not pollute the city territory, became a graphic and very concrete reminder of the quite different codes of honour and dishonour which shaped these pre-modern societies.

The wonderful spin-off of such learning, that combines the visual and sensory experience of physical and built environment, material relic and object, with the written stories and narratives of human, cultural and political development, is that it encourages students to broaden their perspectives on the past. They incorporate far more easily, I think, a breadth of human and societal experience into their understanding of past (and also present) societies, than is the case with a traditional history’s privileging of the political; and they become more interested in employing a far more varied range of documentation to explore that past. Material conditions and transport, artistic production, labour and commerce, religious organization and education, popular belief and gender relations, life stages and rituals, gossip and leisure, all stretch and widen the more traditional and well-worn grooves of economy, society, politics and possibly religion. And students find the courage to complement their reading of chronicles, decrees, letters, laws, journals and treatises with a reading of different media – woodcuts and paintings, ballads and hymns, masons’ marks and architectural styles, guild objects and clothing.

Not only are students emboldened by this kind of study, so are their teachers – or at least this was my experience. Although the shape of my historical research was already strongly influenced by questions about the nature of visual experience in late medieval and early modern European societies when I began teaching ‘history on the spot’ a decade ago, there is little doubt that the teaching helped me consolidate this line of research and defend it in the face of not infrequent puzzlement on the part of some colleagues. It certainly helped me privilege the exploration of the...
historical past through visual documentation, the development of what might be understood as a kind of visual history, as central to my agenda as a historian of pre-modern Europe, and also central to a historical approach I wished to promote amongst my students and colleagues. Moreover the experience of teaching on the spot has also strengthened my conviction that in an age of the sound byte, podcast and video, the most successful way of drawing others into the wonders of learning about the past and the way it is entangled with our present is through the experience and imagination of story and visual object. Broader societal structures and meta-narratives provide shape and meaning for these stories and objects, of course; but it is in their making and telling that we gain insight into the human and emotional forces that drive those historical meanings.
A CLASSROOM LIKE NO OTHER
LEARNING AND TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL TOURISM
In addition to the distinct delivery techniques and content required to lecture *in situ*, academics emphasised how the quality of educational tours encouraged them to think anew about their teaching, and also their research. Many participants on tour are tertiary educated. Indeed some academic respondents to the survey noted their own involvement as clients on educational tours. Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) to the client survey held a university degree. Almost one-in-four (24%) had completed postgraduate coursework studies and a further 13% held a higher degree by research (i.e. Masters or PhD). Moreover, participants on educational tours become involved in the first instance because they are keen to have a learning experience; hence they are often

**PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL TOURISM ENHANCES SCHOLARS COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING SKILLS IN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM.**
thirsty for new knowledge. One male scholar, experienced in tour leading, reflected on the distinction between insights gained on tours with mature learners and his undergraduate classroom teaching experiences:

I think from my point of view that the more people you talk to about this you get lots of different perspectives from them and you learn. I think we learn from talking to them because we can go into a student classroom here, particularly if it’s first or second level, [and] you don’t get any feedback.

Another observed that “on cultural tours you can tap into a unusually wide range of experience: art historians, lawyers, engineers…, and most of all people who have seen, done and thought a lot.”

The idea of creating a tour learning community is suggested through phrasing such as “sharing experiences with like-minded travellers,” which is commonly found in provider literature. A learning community can be defined as a group of people who share some values and beliefs, and are actively engaged in learning together and from each other. Learning communities include concepts of membership (“belonging”), shared experiences and emotional connections. Much of the work on learning communities has focussed on alternative teaching strategies for students, or professionals (Carpenter, Dublin & Harper, 2005; Hayes, 2007; Egan & Jaye, 2009). Three assumptions underlie the support for learning communities: that they will a) create a group that will work together b) increase intellectual interaction and c) enhance learning (Huerta, 2004). More recently, the rise of the internet has seen the emergence of “virtual” learning communities (Teo et. al., 2003). Whilst research has been conducted on learning communities that use tourism to further their goals (Guevara, 1996), educational tourism itself as a learning community appears to have been somewhat overlooked. In survey responses collected during this project, leaders and clients both identified the group experience as a valuable learning resource and rated group
learning/travel experiences higher than individual experiences. A tour leader for one educational tour company described the advantages of the group-learning environment: “that person is sharing all their excitement and enthusiasm and knowledge for what they’re looking at. They’re also sharing that experience with like-minded enquirers.” One male academic who ran tours for independent groups of travellers, friends and companies explained his motivation:

*I enjoy the interaction with other people and it’s really good when you have a group of people who share the same interests. You can sit around the hotel at drinks times and discuss what we’ve seen.*

Others utilised such informal times to promote reflection, much like a tutorial or workshop. One academic tour leader articulated his technique:

*Everybody on that tour is going to have a different story, just from the day’s journey. And so over dinner at night I’d go round the table. I mean, I’d still run a constructed sort of workshop, if you like. … And then that becomes quite interesting because we’ve all seen the same things and yet they’ve all had different experiences of the same things. That’s what leads to the creative discourse.*

A tour leader for one company used these sessions as an opportunity to extend learning and cater to those of different learning interests and levels:

*What I will do every second morning or every second evening is get our guide and say, “whoever wants to join me for half an hour straight after breakfast or half an hour before dinner will come and we’ll talk through the progress of what we’ve [been] doing. We’ll talk through what we’ve seen, where we’ve been and where we’re going, and that will enable me to cater to a more advanced interest if that’s the requirement.*
In such contexts, the leader acts as a facilitator of client learning, using the relationships built over the length of the tour. Academics, as well as clients, have found the sense of learning together an enriching feature of their work in this domain. One female academic leader explained:

*I enjoy meeting the people and I certainly enjoy imparting the knowledge that I have to those people. And some of them are extremely interested, they will come up with questions, no doubt about it, so I enjoy that aspect of it... on the whole I enjoy it, I thoroughly enjoy it, I enjoy meeting them, being with them.*

*The varied background of group members themselves and the life experiences they bring to bear on their understanding of the country they are visiting often generate thought-provoking questions which open new vistas to lecturers themselves.*

Academics, therefore, generally considered that educational tourism enhanced a teacher’s experiences with active-learning and participatory-learning styles.
LET THE MOUNTAINS AND OCEANS SPEAK!
Dr Gayle Mayes, University of the Sunshine Coast

On the very last day of my Diploma in Physical Education at a Brisbane tertiary institution more than 25 years ago, my lightly packed car waited patiently as I farewelled my classmates and thanked the staff for giving me the opportunity to identify my strengths, competencies and passions. During this undergraduate degree I “dropped out” for three and a half years to search for a more meaningful and satisfying direction for my career. At the end of my “gap” years, participating in a 28-day course with the Australian Bound School in Canberra changed my life by opening my eyes to experiential education methods and strategies … and the door to my future.

The foundations of Outward Bound (OB) methods, experiences and outstanding success are firmly laid on Kurt Hahn’s belief that education should be holistic and inspire: “self respect; care for others; responsibility for the community and sensitivity to the world environment” (Zelinski 1991, p. 15). Dewey, referred to as the father of modern experiential education, promoted embedding experiential education teaching and learning methods within the formal education context. Dewey suggested that “education should be real, that is, it should be about life itself and not mere preparation for life” (Dewey 1938, p. 25). My feelings exactly!

I spent an extraordinary 12 months working as an instructor for OB in coastal, rainforest, alpine, eucalypt, and remote wilderness areas of New South Wales, Victoria, ACT and Queensland. Harnessing and witnessing the power of OB experiences during that year led to: a desire to pursue further qualifications via a Post Graduate Diploma in Outdoor Education; teaching for 20 years in tertiary institutions using experiential education as a powerful and effective teaching and learning strategy; a Masters in Education Research with OB courses as the focus; and a PhD entitled “Let the oceans speak” (Mayes, 2008). The PhD also drew heavily from experiential education theory and practices in order to explain and examine the synergistic relationship between education/interpretation and varying intensity levels of wildlife tourism experiences, and the impacts on pro-environmental attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and actions of participants. Experiential education was the focus of my research and remains my preferred and most powerful teaching and learning method.
Kolb’s (1984) and Joplin’s (1981) models and theories are the bases for my experiential education and learning study tours. I see learning as “a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1984, p. 38). I construct the study tours and experiences based on Joplin’s (1995) action-reflection stages and the Adventure Wave Model (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988) to include intense “peaks” that engage the affective domain followed by valleys which engage the cognitive domain and “processing” of the experience. My study tours are less formal than campus lectures, and I incorporate Joplin’s (1981) guidelines for experiential education as the approach:

- learning is student-focused
- content is tailored to “fit” students’ affective and cognitive domains
- process is valued as much as the product and/or completion of tasks
- evaluation is done “by” as well as “to” the participant
- learning is holistic – cognitive, affective, and psychomotor
- experience serves as the central source of learning
- …to the point where the program is built around experiences
- students acquire knowledge and awareness by reflecting on their experiences
- emphasis is on:
  - students understanding then applying the theory to situations
  - observation and recording, establishing gaps between reality and theory
  - sharing, explaining, and learning from their own perspective
  - students reflect on and evaluate their own “journey/learning process”
  - individual, team and group achievements are emphasised
  - students are not compared to others
  - emphasise collaboration and cooperation

The concepts of: “optimal experiences” (special, meaningful and out-of-the-ordinary experiences) (Walker, Hull & Roggenbuck, 1998); “flow”, (where participants experience a feeling of intense emotion, concentration, focus and “transcendence”) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991); and “neumen-seeking” (Ham, 2004) are also accepted as key to the experiential approach to teaching and learning. The results of my PhD supported my beliefs that the intensity of study tours and educational/tourism experiences is the key ingredient to successfully achieving the study tour objectives. I propose that by strategically integrating the affective and cognitive domains with multisensory, high intensity experiences,
nothing we do on a university campus can equal or come close to achieving the impacts and/or success of experiential education and immersing students in such rich learning environments.

At the end of the tour, it is essential to have a guided discussion based on reflection. This reflection time allows students to identify, articulate, share and finally transfer learning to their “home” environment. The reflection and articulation of “lessons” process continues when students return to campus and discuss their unique experiences with their peers, friends and family. This is an important part of the experiential learning and lesson transfer process. Within one week of returning to the university, group members and study tour staff gather for an evening to show and share their photographs and videos. This is an important regrouping and reflection time for sharing, story telling, revisiting meaningful moments, reliving the peaks and valleys and discussing how students’ values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours have changed.

Friendships made between students, the team building, group cohesion and bonding that occurs on study tours appear to be real, strong, deep and lasting. USC study tours to the remote highlands of Fiji require students to work, travel, play and socialise with each other for 10 days, 24 hours a day in the absence of any/all electrical and “high tech” appliances such as iPods, computers, TV, video games etc. Such Westernised entertainment activities are replaced by Fijian language lessons, singing, dancing, card playing and communicating with each other. The high intensity and communal travel experiences give students the opportunity to gain greater self-awareness, enhanced interpersonal communications and richer relationships with each other as they share unique experiences, search for purpose and meaning in life, and especially decide if they want to participate in more study tours or pursue the experience a career pathway.

Study tours contain transformational moments where students experience paradigm shifts and changes in established values. A group of USC students in Fiji watched a staged welcome mece (dance) by a group of young Fijians at a very new resort the very next night after participating in an authentic and emotional farewell mece with the the family and friends from the host village where we had stayed for four days. Every student in the group of 10 experienced an extremely powerful lesson: an understanding of authentic cultural tourism and awareness of a strong connection with our Fijian highland “family”. A teaching experience I will never forget either.
The evaluation of the impacts and successes of study tours is undertaken in a variety of ways. Students usually have tangible outcomes such as reports with recommendations. Research projects that students participate in provide data for conferences and publications. Each group also provides feedback on their experiences via a questionnaire based on the USC Graduate Attributes. Questions include Likert Scale items grouped under the five graduate attributes of: understanding, thinking, learning, interacting and communicating. Each attribute had from one to 10 questions. For example, Leadership and Interpersonal Skills (Item 6.3 in Table 1) had 10 sub-questions. For ease of reporting the results for all items, the results for each item where multiple item scales occurred were combined and an average score for the bullet point items was reported.

Students indicated their perceived amount of change and/or development that occurred as a direct result of participating in the study tour by circling a number from zero to five where scores of:

0 = no occurrence and/or development,
1 = minimal level of occurrence and/or development,
2 = some level of occurrence and/or development,
3 = moderate level of occurrence and/or development,
4 = high level of occurrence and/or development, and
5 = very high level of occurrence and/or development.

The results of the questionnaire given to the first cohort (N=10) are shown in Table 1.
Table 1: Student Responses to the Graduate Attribute Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Attribute 1: TO UNDERSTAND</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have relevant, discipline-based knowledge, skills and values</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to apply and evaluate knowledge</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Attribute 2: TO THINK</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reflect and assess the resources of an area considering a sustainable project</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To value and respect reason associated with sustainable projects</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To plan, manage, and complete a small scale sustainable tourism project</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to reason competently</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Attribute 3: TO LEARN</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be self-aware, independent learners about all aspects of small scale</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustainable development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To undertake appropriate research for a sustainable tourism development project</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Attribute 4: TO INTERACT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to interrelate and collaborate with people from a developing nation</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To value and respect difference and diversity in the Pacific Islands</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Attribute 5: TO COMMUNICATE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak, listen and write competently</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. OTHER DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-respect and a sense of personal agency</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To have a sense of personal and social responsibility</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leadership and interpersonal skills</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To be constructive and creative</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To be enterprising, to solve problems</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To have initiative and independence</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To have innovative approaches to challenges</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These 2007 USC Graduate Attributes were revised in 2009.
Only one attribute (6.1) in Table 1 had an average score below 4. The average scores for items 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 were 4.5 and above. This meant that students reported a “high to very high level of occurrence and/or development” in 17 out of the 18 items in Table 1. This is an excellent result for the Graduate Attributes and associated items and an indication of the power and effectiveness of the Fiji highlands educational tourism experiences.

Students of the same cohort were also asked to rate the importance and value of the Fiji highlands study tour in relation to their whole university experience on a 10-point Likert scale. Results are shown in Table 2. Both scores were above 9 for the entire group. This clearly shows how important this ten-day experience was perceived by the students as a part of their overall three-year experience at the University of the Sunshine Coast.
The objectives of the study tour are tailor made to accommodate and optimize on the skill sets of the individuals of participating groups. For example, very different expeditions for students from each of the three faculties of Science, Health and Education, Business and Arts and Social Science have been planned and delivered. Therefore, the focus of each tour aligns with the discipline areas of participating students and builds on the activities of preceding groups. Texts and strategically selected readings and research articles were used for the theoretical foundations and springboard for delivery of the first expedition and the following objectives directed the tour content, teaching and learning methods and activities:

By participating in this study tour, students should be able to:
• Put sustainable theory into practice
• Review and critically analyse literature associated with: the social, political, cultural and environmental history of Fiji; sustainable cultural tourism, Community-based tourism; backpacker tourism; Small Island States or Destinations
• Use the knowledge, skills and framework to undertake a multi-faceted site assessment
• Confidently participate in research, preparation, writing and reporting
• Develop short, medium and long-term SMART recommendations
• Make recommendations that are culturally appropriate, economically viable and achievable for the Fiji highland tourism business
• Feel empowered as change agents in sustainability
• Experience enhanced self-efficacy in designing and communicating appropriate short, medium and long-term recommendations
• Motivate and empower the village resort owner and his staff in choosing and implementing a number of short-term recommendations

Table 2: Importance and value of the expedition in relation to students’ overall university experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Score/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The importance of the Fiji expedition in your overall university experience.</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The value of the Fiji expedition as a part of your entire degree</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Suggest ways in which the village could increase their quality of tourism and hospitality service and products including education and training of the staff and villagers
• Develop and present a variety of recommendations that may enhance the economic, cultural, environmental and social sustainability of the micro business
• Feel more motivated and confident in making a difference in their own countries
• Behave and act more pro-environmentally and sustainably
• Make recommendations and implement more sustainable practices in their own countries

Although the teaching and learning sessions took place in an open air deck with the Fiji highlands as the backdrop, the students participated well and developed an appropriate framework for undertaking the research and application of theory and a set of realistic and achievable recommendations. The students were highly motivated by the needs of the remote Fijian community, the fun, and especially the close emotional connection with the Fijian children and their families. The students worked in small discipline-related teams to create a report which they personally delivered to our Fijian host after our Fijian cultural broker and I had perused the document for any recommendations that may have been unrealistic or unachievable. Only two small changes were made. The group then sat on a grass mat on the floor of a three-sided corrugated iron shed as our Fijian host listened and responded where relevant to each student who explained the recommendations in detail.

Since the first of these expeditions in 2007, several students have returned in subsequent tours while a nursing student aims to undertake part of her practical placement in a remote health/medical centre as a result of the expedition. Several students have returned to Fiji for their own vacations while many decided that they will definitely pursue work in developing countries. One student was offered a position in health promotion in North Queensland based on her experience and report on traditional Fiji medicine practices which contained a set of health-based recommendations for developing a health centre in our host Fijian village.
Educational Tourism can provide intense, empowering, meaningful and transforming experiences for participants, and I will continue using and developing these exciting and adventurous expeditions as a preferred nexus for education and research and as an effective teaching and learning method for tertiary students in the future.

Csikszentmihalyi, M 1991, Flow: The psychology of optimal experience, Harper and Rowe, NY, USA.

Dewey, J 1938, Experience and education, MacMillan, NY, USA.


As well as participating as tour leaders, the project research has highlighted a range of other opportunities for academic input. Many do not require scholars to travel on, or lead, tours. Organising travel itineraries; identifying seminal historical moments, architectural features, geographic regions; writing travel literature; and speaking at information sessions also provide educational tourism opportunities for engagement with the expertise of the academy. One academic interviewed about the value of these wider activities remarked that:

*It also gave me the opportunity to develop my philosophy of learning in place by getting to know a specific itinerary well, and discussing it continually with my tour guide and tour leader colleagues.*
A significant facet of academic engagement with educational tourism occurs off-tour, writing preparatory materials and designing tours. Tourist information has been shown to have an important influence on the choice of vacation destinations by travellers (Molina & Esteban, 2006). There has been much scholarly research on the role of such publications in the decision-making process of potential travellers (for example: Capella & Greco, 1987; Robinson & Anderson, 2002; Beerli & Martin, 2004). However, research is scant concerning the role guidebooks play in education. Werry (2008, p.18) does however refer to travel literature as a “de-facto teacher” of tourism’s knowledges and ways of knowing. Botterill and Crompton (1996) have noted that the tourist “vacates” their normal space and creates an understanding of the new, and so holidaying space is an area where intermediaries such as tour guides and travel writers can be important in enabling the traveller. This research is mirrored in our project’s findings. Responses to questions investigating educational aids highlighted the fact that the educational tourism experience was not confined to the actual travel component, but extended to encompass learning opportunities on either side of the tour. There were significant opportunities for scholarly interactions in off-site educational tour opportunities.

A number of the academic scholars interviewed had been asked to compose the content for tour handbooks. One academic described his motivation for writing such texts:

I thought it would be interesting, to see if I could… I came to the realisation not only that I could do it, but that it was quite interesting to write for a general audience.

Asked what is involved in pitching to this audience, one academic responded: “I think you do have a duty to be interesting and to write reasonably clearly.” How this has impacted academics’ other scholarly writing was also explored. As one male academic put it:
I found it quite interesting. It made me realise that this was something that I could do and that it’s quite enjoyable doing it… The point is: everything you do is a dialogue with an audience that is either there, or is a potential audience. And so many times the dialogue comes back to you unexpectedly, without you planning or even knowing it. You don’t know who you’re writing for, you never know who you’re writing for. And I find that extraordinarily interesting, that you can get something out of the blue… So you’re always learning new stuff out of the blue. And of course it feeds into your teaching.

A tour leader for one educational tour company described the materials he prepared for participants on his tours as:

*Good solid introductions to daily visits that we’re doing in that way. Extensive bibliography which everyone gets of course a month or so before. But I think perhaps more importantly and as a very important teaching aid what all these books contain are maps which can be used as historical discussions points… Or they might include individual plans of buildings.*

How such material is used was highly variable, as academics observed:

*The people that come on these tours don’t want to go overseas for three weeks and study in the way that we would think it. They don’t really want to do much reading in the evening. They… a few of them will prepare themselves, the majority will not.*

*There’s a strong risk that the guidebook (in all its forms) will predetermine and prescribe what the traveller experiences, and will reinforce a dominant account of what’s being tourised. I do think the guidebook and its variants should be read, but they should be read critically, not as prescriptions.*
Another academic took a different (and unusual) approach to providing literature for the clients to use on tour:

At the beginning we took the decision that the city was the text, and the handbook just accompanied that... but the internet has changed everything. There's just so much more that they can access now, wherever they are.

Interestingly, the web appeared to play little part in post-tour reflection according to respondents, although at least one academic interviewed had extended the educational experience both before and beyond the on-site engagement with his group: “on my website I keep the reports from the tours and I've given detailed notes beforehand and I keep them on the site as well, so I think it makes a huge difference.” Another academic felt that regular updates from the providers of the tour could help to “keep the experience alive for the people on tour.”
EXPERIENCING THE AGES OF ANATOLIA
Dr Michael Given, University of Glasgow

Between 1998 and 2004 I was a tour lecturer on Australians Studying Abroad’s ‘Ages of Anatolia’ tour in Turkey, and in 2006 on their tour of Turkey, Rhodes and Cyprus. I have also led study tours to Greece for undergraduates from the University of Glasgow, where such tours are a required element of the course. For me as a landscape archaeologist, all of these provided the perfect opportunity to stimulate interest and communicate archaeological understanding in the best classroom in the world: the archaeological landscape.

The Tour
At its most basic level, the form taken by ‘Ages of Anatolia’ was designed for the conveying of factual information. This was obvious in the site visits, with all the facts, figures and dates given by the tour guide, tour leader and myself. But this classroom stuff played a relatively minor role. Archaeology is very much a practice with a specific set of skills and methods, and the archaeological landscape is the place to learn it. So the travellers learned to identify Greek letters and column capitals, to spot which bits of monuments had been reconstructed, to interpret architectural plans, and in the widest sense to read the landscape.

However logical the itinerary, there are always huge leaps backwards and forwards in time as you lurch from the 20th century Dardanelles to Bronze Age Troy to Hellenistic Pergamon. But these leaps allow travellers to make connections and comparisons, so they can understand the strategic importance of site location, or the continuities in defensive architecture in the last three millennia, or whatever it might be. ‘You’ll see another example of this on Tuesday’ is the constant refrain of the tour lecturer.

Lectures and monologues don’t work very well in the classroom; they’re even worse in the landscape. Having three of us – tour guide, tour leader and tour lecturer – meant we could bat ideas backwards and forwards, supplement each other and sometimes even disagree with each other – just to keep the learning dynamic, of course... All three of us used questions and answers so that travellers would be actively thinking and learning, and best of all were the ad hoc discussions that flared up round some Roman statue base or Neolithic house.
The same applied to evening lectures, which worked best as group discussions – certainly better than the notorious after-lunch bus lectures when only the driver (and sometimes the lecturer) was fully awake. One traveller told me that she was delighted to have the opportunity ‘to look over the shoulder of an archaeologist’. Many of them asked about what archaeologists did and how excavation worked. Although (perhaps!) of interest in itself, this is central to understanding the landscape and the past. After all, an archaeological site is a modern artefact created by an uneasy alliance of academic research questions, the needs of the tourist industry, and nineteenth century treasure hunting. By hearing about the everyday trials and tribulations of archaeologists, travellers begin to appreciate the construction of archaeological knowledge, and look at ‘sites’ with new eyes.

Learning in Place
However good the slides – which were, of course taken while on tour – a classroom lecture is a pale reflection of the actual landscape. Monologues encourage passive learning of facts rather than active engagement with place. I am a fan of ‘What is it?’ archaeology. This is a question asked continually by the tour lecturer: it encourages people to look round at the context, observe details such as traces of wear, think of parallels, and use their imagination. ‘How does it work?’ and ‘Why is it here?’ work just as well. The stimulus to learning comes directly from the place and the past, rather than the bullet points on the screen.

The modern context is an essential part of understanding a past society. Different foods and different ways of eating, drinking and living all make you think about the practicalities and choices of everyday life in the past. Understanding the local environment – plants, animals, soils, geology, climate – is an integral part of understanding how a society lived in that environment. How can you teach Mediterranean archaeology to a student who has never seen an olive tree?

Tour Lecturing
Armchair archaeologists are pretty thin on the ground. It is hard to find an archaeologist who is not deeply engaged with place, architecture or material culture. As a landscape archaeologist and a field archaeologist, I have always believed in learning in the landscape. Working as a tour lecturer certainly confirmed that. It also gave me the opportunity to develop my philosophy of learning in place by getting to know a specific itinerary well, and discussing it continually with my tour guide and tour leader colleagues.
The other important players are, of course, the travellers on the tour (I quickly learnt not to call them ‘tourists’). Any teaching which is reasonably interactive opens you up to all sorts of opinions and perspectives. On cultural tours you can tap into an unusually wide range of experience: art historians, lawyers, engineers (because of my own interests I particularly enjoyed talking to the farmers), and most of all people who have seen, done and thought a lot.

Tour lecturing in Turkey affected my work in a very literal way when I decided to use some of the sites and landscapes we visited as a case study for my 2004 book ‘The Archaeology of the Colonized’. In retrospect, it is interesting that this case study focuses on the experience of travellers, and what life was like on the roads of Anatolia under the Roman Empire. Other than four seasons of fieldwork, most of my experience of Turkey has been very much that of a traveller, on the road in the tour bus. Has that subconsciously affected my understanding of the human experience of place in the past?

Text and Experience
Touring a classical site with its monumental inscriptions underlines the archaeological commonplace that a text is a specific item of material culture with its own context. This is why it is so stimulating to remove the context of the library or office in Glasgow or Brisbane and replace it with one so much nearer the heart of the text. Travellers and performers alike, for example, really identified with the account of the riot against St Paul in Ephesus, read out in the actual theatre where it happened, or with the performance of a scene from Aristophanes’ Frogs in the Odeon at Aphrodisias, where a chorus was in one year joined by a real frog calling from the flooded orchestra.

The same need for context applies to a modern text such as an academic analysis or a popular account. Many seem very far divorced from the place and human experience they are supposedly communicating. Can we reinvigorate our accounts with the same sense of ‘being there’ that you get from an in-depth visit to a site or landscape?

One way of exploring this is through stories. Traditional stories, in antiquity as well as today, tend to hang on a particular tree or stream or footprint in a rock. So they really can communicate a sense of place that is embedded in a particular society. One year I experimented with this by telling a rather rambling story on the bus between Ephesus and Aphrodisias in the voice of a garrulous Roman mule driver or modern tour guide (or both?)
called Hermon. As I continue to explore the relationship between archaeology and storytelling, Hermon (or someone very like him) has appeared in a Roman village in Egypt, a Cypriot copper mine, and most recently at a Viking settlement in Shetland.

'Serendipitous Experience'
No experience is serendipitous. It is all part of a landscape and a context: the places we tend to go to, the people we tend to meet. As humans, we try and fit these experiences into a pattern that constitutes our selves and our landscapes. Being laughed at for my belly dancing, reading Euripides in the theatre at Aphrodisias, visiting the backstreet bars that only the local tour guides know, getting excited by yet another threshing sledge standing outside a restaurant – these do, somehow, fit together into my experience of ‘being’ in Turkey. And when I try and teach or write about Turkey, it is that complete range of experience, serendipitous or otherwise, that informs and channels my communication.
Academics considered that participation as teachers in educational tourism could result in new ways of thinking about their subject to take back to the classroom, as well as provide new resources (such as notes, data, photos, and so on). A female academic leader commented:

It’s not only looking at the monuments yet again, seeing perhaps new monuments. That would help, but no, interaction with the people on the tour would enhance my understanding of my research.

A number of academic scholars highlighted overlap between their work in the higher educational sector and for educational tourism.

PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL TOURISM ENHANCES SCHOLARS RESEARCH BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY BY SECURING FUNDS, ACCESSING UNIQUE OR IMPORTANT SITES, AND ENGAGING WITH A LEARNING COMMUNITY.
As one academic observed, “a lot goes back in to the lectures afterwards.”

However, the interdisciplinary and narrative nature of the content delivery required on tour also promoted insights for scholars’ research. Academics considered that educational tourism could stimulate new ways of thinking about their research because they were required to bring together diverse visual, material and topographic texts to bear on the themes and questions of their tours. Equally, individual sites and objects were analysed through varied disciplinary lenses to respond to and provoke students’ learning. A particular environment, landscape or object can rarely be understood only through a single form of context, be it historical, artistic, literary or spatial, often requiring scholarly leaders to explore its meanings beyond the disciplinary field in which they were trained and taught on campus.

Similarly, the narrative techniques demanded by educational tourism produce new ways of conceptualising subject material and key themes. The requirement of tour presentation to build a coherent narrative or explanatory framework, often over a long chronological or geographic range, forced scholars to consider their more discrete expertise in a new light.

Participation in educational tourism assisted scholars’ understanding of their research in conceptual terms but also in more concrete ways too, some academics considered that educational tourism could be valuable in linking scholars to new networks and collaborators. More than one academic explained their involvement in this domain in terms of advancing their own research agenda through the opportunity to explore new or unique destinations, or to revisit sites of interest.
Academics were able to advance their own learning and research through tour locations: the company “can gain access – because of their contacts and reputation – to sites that you wouldn’t be able to see yourself.” Another academic reflected that “they’ve given me access to opportunities I never would have had.” Academic tour leaders could also exploit opportunities to stay on site pre or post tour to conduct their own research activities.

Involvement with a tour company had also enabled some scholars to develop their research interests with the funds the company provided. One academic indicated that the company had donated funds to his team’s ongoing excavation. Furthermore, one of the companies involved in this study is a not-for-profit organisation, comprised of 25 member universities and colleges, part of whose income is allocated to support university-based research programs.
CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: REFLECTIONS,
Dr Amira K. Bennison, University of Cambridge

Taking cultural tours around North Africa and the Middle East was one of the most enriching experiences I have had from many different perspectives. I had already travelled extensively in the region and lived for a time in Cairo and Rabat while also completing a series of degrees in Arabic and Middle Eastern history. From the moment I touched down at Cairo airport with my heart pounding, heard the call to prayer and inhaled the distinctive aroma of warm tarmac and spice, I realised the importance of place to understanding history.

A stint working at the American University in Cairo enabled me to join several art history courses in which experts such as George Scanlon and Bernard O’Kane inspired often recalcitrant Egyptian students with the glories of their heritage by dragging them around the old city of Cairo to mosques, theological colleges (madrasas), mausoleums and hospitals. I loved every minute and found it hugely evocative to stand under the huge crumbling arches of the thirteenth century hospital of Qalawun, wander across the courtyard of the ninth century mosque of Ibn Tulun, and explore the funerary complexes of the extramural necropolis known as the City of the Dead which stands on the desert edge near its deep silence but nonetheless bustles with the activity of the poor families who have now colonised it for their own purposes. In Morocco, I became similarly captivated by the interplay between the history I studied in the archives of Rabat and the built environment of the country, its spectacular landscapes, and its diverse population made up of indigenous Berber tribes, Arab tribes who had migrated in the Islamic era, Muslim refugees from Spain and Portugal and sub-Saharan Africans.

With this background, I jumped at the opportunity to lecture on and design cultural tours which would introduce groups to the history and culture of the Middle East, North Africa and Islamic Spain. It seemed the perfect way to address the stereotypes of Muslims held by many in developed countries and introduce people to these cultures in context. Classroom teaching tends to be text-based and constrained within the allotted hours. Even when it is supplemented with images and maps, students rarely get a three-dimensional view of what they are studying. To drive in a coach down the Moroccan Wad Ziz valley, however, and talk to a group about tribal movements up such valleys around the barrier of the looming High Atlas mountains gives history an immediacy
it rarely has on campus – especially when tribesmen can still be seen in the distance guarding their sheep outside their black tents. In a similar way, trudging down the narrow alleys of Fes, Cairo or Aleppo gives a unique opportunity to discuss the social reasons why homes often have blank facades, or to understand why the suqs (markets) cluster around the main mosques.

While I am always keen to stress to groups that the scenes they see are not timeless, it is also true that seeing how people today actually live in these spaces gives a sense of how such cities functioned in the past. Cultural tourism is a bit like theatre in the round – groups not only learn in a conventional way by listening to lectures but also become part of the place which they are exploring. Medieval trade and industry come to life as groups get pushed from side to side by the crowds in Cairo’s Khan al-Khalili or watch a Moroccan weave traditional fabric they can buy in a shady medieval workshop in Fes. The role of the tour lecturer is to make the connections, explain the links between past and present, and the interplay between history and geography.

This is as enriching for the lecturer as for a group. As a textual historian, I do tend to start with a corpus of texts – historical chronicles, biographical dictionaries, government correspondence, or records of some kind – but these have much more meaning when combined with the landscape in which they originated. In fact, visiting numerous ruined Islamic palaces and discussing them with tour groups defined a new trajectory within my own research: the analysis of written descriptions of palaces and ceremonies in conjunction with the physical evidence to understand what image medieval rulers were trying to project to their subjects when they built palaces and re-shaped cities.

The interaction between place and text which cultural tourism fosters can take many forms: travelling the routes through Syria suddenly makes clear why the city state has been such an enduring phenomenon or why the Crusaders only controlled the coast, issues described but not explained by medieval historians; the sight of the imposing Mamluk theological colleges and mausoleums of Aleppo or Cairo reinforces the stress placed on their social importance in historical writing. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between text and place with each deepening understanding of the other.

The other huge advantage of cultural tourism for a scholar is the way in which it demands recognition of the ‘big picture’ as well as detailed and insightful commentary of a more specialised nature. It is easy to become very narrowly focussed in research
but cultural tourism requires a broad and thematic understanding of a country or region. While one might argue that teaching also demands this, the joy of cultural tourism is the absence of a curriculum or examinations which leaves the lecturer free to be creative, to think about their subject in new ways, and explore possibilities generated by the landscape they are themselves engaging with alongside their group.

In weaving space and time together to give a holistic picture, I have often gained new insights into historical patterns in North Africa and the Middle East making it easier to contextualise more specialised research. Moreover the varied background of group members themselves and the life experiences they bring to bear on their understanding of the country they are visiting often generate thought-provoking questions which open new vistas to lecturers themselves. It is perhaps this interactive quality which makes cultural tourism so uniquely rewarding for both participants and instructors.
At an institutional level, increased involvement of their staff in educational tourism should be attractive to universities because:

**Educational tourism has the potential to play a significant role in attracting new student groups.** This can take the form of cross-institutional enrolments between universities, re-engagement with alumni, or the introduction to the tertiary sector of those who have not had the opportunity to study at a university.

**Educational tourism offers opportunities to diversify the student body.** Through interactions with members of the general public and enrolled students participating on the same program, different voices and experiences can be brought together to enrich the learning environment for all participants in such programs.

**Educational tourism provides universities with a receptive and engaged site for knowledge transfer.** Educational tourism companies are commercial enterprises for whom high quality humanities knowledge is a key commercial asset. Moreover, interactions with such enterprises can help to sharpen scholarly awareness of the needs and use of such knowledge beyond the academy.
Educational tourism is a form of lifelong learning, allowing universities to honour their social and ethical commitment. The support by tertiary institutions for diverse forms of academic knowledge engagement fosters learning however, and by whoever, it may be obtained.

Academic scholars who already engage with this sector indicate that participation in educational tourism enhances their communication and teaching skills in and beyond the classroom. It provides them with a variety of dissemination formats for intellectual engagement with new students and changes the way they think about their teaching and research. Their participation can be an opportunity to bring research and teaching goals into stronger nexus and it enhances their research both directly and indirectly through securing funds, accessing unique or important sites, and engaging with a learning community.

In order to facilitate the involvement of academics, educational tour providers are increasingly distinguishing leader and manager roles to allow leaders to engage more fully in the intellectual life of the tour learning community. Moreover, physically leading a tour is only one way in which academic participation in educational tourism may occur. A wide range of opportunities for interactions between scholarly knowledge and the educational tourism domain exist, many of which are yet to be fully explored by universities and their staff.
References


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