

Chronology: Cultural Heritage Tourism Movement in the U.S.

Cultural heritage tourism is not new. For centuries, visitors have embarked on excursions around the world that explore ancient and current cultures, their architecture, cuisine, craft, literature, music, art, customs and traditions. They flock to historical places to understand the impact of past generations as demonstrated through inventions, politics, sports, religion, entertainment, industry and commerce.

In the past decade, the cultural heritage tourism movement in the US has gained recognition and momentum. Why? In part, its economic and experiential impact has been defined, dissected and measured. The following benchmarks represent milestones in the growth of this US travel industry sector.

- 1983 The Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel recognizes and nationally markets its cultural heritage by publishing and distributing one of the first guides to African-American historic sites, *Alabama's Black Heritage Guide*.
- 1988 San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau hires first cultural tourism director.
- 1988 National Tour Association survey of travelers over 50 showed that 52.3% favor trips to historical sites and 62% traveling on group tours favor visits to heritage places (over beaches, warm weather destinations, fall foliage, and sightseeing tours.)
- 1989 National Endowment for the Arts and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies partner with Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) to survey state arts agencies and tourism offices about existing collaborations.
- 1989 National Endowment for the Arts awards National Trust for Historic Preservation a challenge grant to create the first US initiative in "heritage tourism." Sixteen pilot areas in four states – Indiana, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin – test process for defining, assessing, developing, marketing and measuring heritage tourism. First state "heritage tourism managers" are employed to oversee the three-year initiative.
- 1991 USTTA reports that almost 1/3 of all overseas travelers to the US (31.9%) visited historic places (the sixth most popular category); visiting national parks ranked next (31.9%); touring an art gallery/ museum ranked ninth out of 18 categories.
- 1991 TIA conducts first national research on motivation for travel to historic sites. The number one reason cited is personal enjoyment/ entertainment, followed by personal education, and education of children.
- 1992 National Trust uses pilot areas to profile cultural heritage travelers. Research conducted by Davidson-Peterson Associates is first to nationally define these customers that spend more, stay longer; are more educated and more affluent.
- 1993 American Express funds publication of *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism*. The guide, developed by National Trust, defines heritage tourism outlines the five guiding principles and four steps for building a successful and sustainable heritage tourism. 14,500 copies have been printed and distributed to date to all 50 states, territories and 15 countries.

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- 1994 TIA includes historic sites and cultural attractions to category of activities for leisure domestic travelers to select from in its quarterly TravelScope Survey. In its first quarter, visiting historic sites was selected by 35% of US adults intending to travel in the next three months with 29% indicating their interest in touring cultural attractions. In Fall 1994, activity interest for US adult leisure travelers escalates for historic sites (49%) and cultural attractions (45%).
- 1993 *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine poll ranks visiting historic sites second only to beaches as most desired activities for families.
- 1994 10-minute video entitled *Preserving our Past... Building Our Future* produced and distributed by National Trust and American Express to showcase the opportunities of heritage tourism for local communities.
- 1995 White House Conference on Travel & Tourism (WHCTT) includes issues and opportunity statements for cultural heritage tourism. Presidents Committee on The Arts & The Humanities (PCAH) publishes and distributes *Exploring America Through its Culture* to all WHCTT delegates.
- 1995 American Association of Museum, with assistance from other national entities (the informal "Partners in Tourism" coalition), publishes *Cultural Tourism in the United States*, as a white paper outlining specific responses and actions for the nine action areas (product development, promotion, research, technology, infrastructure, education/training, environmental concerns, facilitation, safety & security.)
- 1996 Coalition of national associations and federal agencies representing the arts, humanities, tourism and heritage organizations throughout the country and the federal cultural heritage agencies formally join together as "Partners in Tourism."
- 1996 First of five regional cultural heritage tourism forums held in Annapolis, Maryland in November. Four others scheduled around the country through 1997.
- 1995 Spring Travelometer conducted by TIA reports that 48% of US adults planning a pleasure trip in the next three months intended to visit a historic site; 41 % planned to visit a cultural site.
- 1997 *Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce* report published with findings of the regional forums.
- 1997 National Endowment for the Arts' *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* reports that 50% of the adult population – 97 million people – attended at least one arts activity in 1996, up from 41% in 1992. Art museums are the most popular way to participate in the arts (35%), and are frequent customers with most visiting an average of 3.3 times a year. Another NEA study conducted by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), US Department of Commerce, shows that American consumers spent more than \$10 billion dollars on admissions to performing arts events in 1997 – roughly 1.6 times more than spending on admissions to motion pictures or spectator sports events.

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- 1997 TIA publishes first national cultural heritage tourism study entitled, *Profile of Travelers who Engage in Cultural & Historic Activities*, based on 1996 National Travel Survey and 1995 TravelScope data. These travelers differ from other US travelers as they have annual household incomes over \$50,000 (46% vs. 40%) and completed college (33% vs. 28%). They spend more money per trip (\$615 vs \$425); and stay longer than other visitors.
- 1998 Tourism Industries, US Department of Commerce collaborates with The Taubman Company to produce the *Shopping and Cultural/Heritage Tourism* survey, reporting that one in three international visitors – 7.8 million – engaged in both shopping and visited a cultural heritage activity in 1997. The top cultural heritage activities among international shoppers include: visiting historic places (35%); visiting cultural heritage sites (21%); visiting national parks (21%), visiting an art gallery and/or museum (20%). Activity shoppers stayed longer in the US (nearly a week) than general shoppers.
- 1998 Cultural Tourism Alliance formed. Renamed “Cultural & Heritage Tourism Alliance” in 2002. Informal alliance hosts annual meeting for practitioners engaged in cultural heritage tourism.
- 1998 Partners in Tourism’s Research Forum redefines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources.”
- 1998 Americans for the Arts commissions TIA to study whether travelers add time to a trip specifically because of culture or heritage. An updated study is released in 2001.
- 1999 Partners in Tourism begins publishing *Cultural Tourism News*, a semi-annual/quarterly publication funded by American Express for industry practitioners.
- 1999 *Better Homes & Gardens/ Meredith Corporation* poll ranks visiting historic and cultural attractions as the #1 activity for American families in 1998; 48% included historic sites on their trip vs. 33% in 1998.
- 2000 TIA study ranks “visiting historical and cultural activities ” as the second most popular activity for domestic travelers (22%), just behind shopping (31%). The most popular historic and cultural activities are: historic sites, museums, art galleries and live theatre.
- 2000 American Express and the National Endowment for the Arts begin funding series of *Share Your Heritage* workshops, led by National Trust for Historic Preservation, to help develop and enhance cultural heritage tourism product throughout the US.
- 2001 Partners in Tourism commissions TIA to add a series of questions to January 2001 National Travel Survey to determine the length of time that travelers extend their trips because of cultural & heritage activities and events. Findings: two-thirds (65%) of American adult travelers – or 92.7 million travelers – include a cultural, arts, heritage or historic activity or event when on a trip of 50 miles or more, one way in 2000. The

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specific activities and events include: historic site (43%); museum (30%); live theatre (23%); art gallery (21%); heritage/ethnic festival (20%).

TIA study also determined that the percentage of travelers who added one or more nights (either when planning the trip or while on the trip) increased significantly between 1998 and 2000 – from 49% to 57%. Of the 29.6 million travelers who added time to trip because of a cultural/heritage activity: 43% added part of one day; 31% added one extra night; 19% added two extra nights; and 7% added three or more nights. Eighteen percent of historic/cultural travelers say they spend more than \$1000 when they travel, compared to 12% of all travelers.

- 2001 National Trust's Heritage Tourism Program study shows that more than half (27) of the states have a statewide program in cultural and/or heritage tourism.
- 2001 National Trust releases the American Express funded publication *Share Your Heritage: Cultural Heritage Tourism Success Stories*. A companion National Trust publication, *Stories Across America: Opportunities in Rural Tourism* is funded by a consortium of federal agencies including the National Endowment for the Arts, USDA, USDOT and the America's Byways Resource Center.
- 2002 First national meeting of state cultural heritage tourism professionals held in Phoenix, Arizona.
- 2002 TIA and National Geographic Traveler release *Geotourism Study*, reporting that 55 million Americans are interested in tourism that "sustains or enhances the geographical character of the place being visited – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents."
- 2003 TIA's TravelScope survey expands to include "historic places, sites, museums," "performing arts," "cultural events/festivals," and "art museums/galleries" as trip activities.
- 2003 TIA and Smithsonian Magazine join together to update research and publish *The Historic/Cultural Traveler, 2003 Edition*.
- 2005 A dedicated website for cultural heritage tourism practitioners (www.culturalheritagetourism.org) is launched midyear.

Facts about the cultural heritage tourism product:

- 870 institutions are accredited by the American Association of Museums (July 2003)
- There are more than one million sites and objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For designation by the US Department of Interior, the site or object must be 1) associated with a significant event; 2) associated with a significant person; 3) have architectural significance; 4) archaeological significance; or 5) be at least 50 years old.
- The US Department of Interior has designated more than 2200 National Historic Landmarks.
- Congress has officially designated 25 National Heritage Areas in the US.