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Cultural tourism

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Culture is in demand

For many tourists sightseeing is the most interesting aspect of a holiday

Culture continues to be in demand with tourists, and it is unlikely the economic crisis will change that anytime soon. These are the results of a recent survey by the University of Paderborn. Commissioned by Gebeco, organisers of educational and adventure tourism, this representative poll among Germans, examining their holiday interests, will be presented **on 13 March** at the **ITB Berlin Convention 2009**. The survey's aim was to answer questions interesting the entire industry, organisers, destinations, carriers and operators managing tourist attractions. Which tourists take an interest in culture? Why do tourists visit cultural attractions? How important are cultural holiday activities? What are the prospects for various kinds of cultural travel?

This year Messe Berlin is devoting one day of its convention to the topic of tourism and culture. On Friday, 13 March (from 11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., in Hall 7.1a, Saal New York 1), at the ITB Tourism and Culture Day, and in one of the two introductory speeches, Prof. Dr. Albrecht Steinecke from the University of Paderborn will present the results of the Gebeco survey. It comes as no surprise that the survey shows German tourists to be very interested in cultural attractions at their travel destinations, a result identical to the findings of tour organisers in Germany. What is surprising is the degree of their interest. The survey polled a representative cross-section of 1,509 persons over 16 year of age. 63.6 per cent said they were interested in the cultural attractions of their holiday destination during their last vacation. This means that culture as a motivating factor is surpassed only by generally wanting to „relax and do nothing“, as stated by 65.6 per cent. At 60 per cent, „exercise and activities“ ranked second, and 48 per cent agreed on looking after their „health, looks and body“ as joint motivating factors. Only 30.5 per cent of those polled agreed on “fun and entertainment” as the reasons for taking a holiday, regardless of the destination.

As surprising as the numbers favouring culture may seem, managers marketing German destinations have known this for a long time. Thus, culture is an important factor in marketing Hamburg as a holiday destination and brand. Besides the established cultural institutions, musicals are an important part of people's image of Hamburg as one of Germany's centres of cultural activity. For Lower Saxony cultural tourism is a mainstay too. Over half of all tourists consider the wide range of cultural attractions in this state to be „important“ or „very important“ .

As a state in which both German and European history have played a significant role, Saxony Anhalt has benefited by focusing on culture and city tourism. Demand is growing year by year. According to the most recent findings of a recurring poll of hotel guests (PEG) from 2006/2007, 29 per cent of the overall numbers booking overnight stays were interested in sightseeing and cultural tourism, an 18 per cent rise over figures from 2001/2002. For day trips the increase was actually over 40 per cent.



Culture moves mountains

For some years a product range entitled „KulturReiseland Hessen“ , which includes classical music, theatre and musical theatre, rock, pop & jazz, as well as exhibitions and festivals, has played a significant part in gaining new customers. Culture and city tourism ranks alongside spas and wellness, active holidays, vacationing in nature and day trips. Among tourists who visit Thuringia, holidays in the footsteps of Bach, Luther, Goethe and Schiller are particularly sought after. Schleswig-Holstein's (cultural) highlights include a colourful array of museums, well-preserved, historical port towns, and the Hanse city of Lübeck, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, and not least a town able to count three Nobel Prize winners its own: Günter Grass, Thomas Mann and Willy Brandt. The geographical location of the Saarland makes it uniquely popular among tourists. Most of what it offers in terms of culture crosses national borders into France and Luxembourg. The European Culture Park in Bliesbruck-Reinheim, which exhibits the remains of a Celtic-Roman past on the border between the Saarland and the French département of Moselle, serves as one example among many. The hotel brand specifically created by Bayern Tourismus Marketing GmbH (by.TM) perfectly fits the cultural mould. Already there are 27 „sightsleeping“ hotels. A jury which picks the hotels singles out architectural attractiveness and high aesthetic quality as its main criteria for their choices. Brand affiliates include hotels with a valuable art collection, such as Schloss Pommersfelden, or designer hotels such as the Nebelhorn Relaxhotel.

The Ruhr metropolis, the European Capital of Culture 2010, and this year's partner region at ITB Berlin, is proof that culture in tourism can move (even landfill) mountains. Up to now partner countries have occupied this role. Last year, for example, it was India. „Culture is key to marketing Northrhine-Westphalia as a travel destination“ , says Prof. Dr. Ute Dallmeier, Managing Director of Tourismus NRW. „The stereotype view that no-one really wants to visit the industrial Ruhr gives our region cult status.“ This contradiction alone attracts tourists. Dallmeier: „The region's industrial background is important, as it distinguishes it from others.“ Current structural changes „are kicking off trends which we must market more intensively in the future“ . The Love Parade, Ruhrtriennale, Ruhrfestspiele or Extraschicht are „only a few examples of cultural events with an international appeal, which, in addition to the established cultural offerings of Cologne, Bonn and Düsseldorf, all cities on the Rhine, represent marketable products.“

Intense competition

Despite the huge demand, the vast number of cultural attractions on offer do not necessarily enjoy a peaceful co-existence. In the future, Prof. Dr. Albrecht Steinecke, the scientific manager of the survey, expects competition in the market for cultural tourism to intensify. In his book published in 2007 entitled Cultural Tourism and sub-titled „market structures, case studies, prospects“ , he lists the growing desire of culturally interested tourists for presentations and information, as well as the emergence of new competitors such as museums, cities and regions as driving forces. Steinecke also mentions „controls on access to cultural institutions due to strains and civil protests, and the creation of replacement products“ . In the context of cultural tourism he cites adventure theme parks as an example of the latter.



It is possible that polarisation will set in cultural tourism, in the same way as it has over several years in the tourism industry, says Steinecke. On the one hand there are people with an inadequate knowledge of the market and how to market regional products, who are badly organised and working with low budgets. Steinecke, Chair of the Economic and Tourism Geography Department at the University of Paderborn, means local history museums, local festivals and „historical cultural attractions of scant interest.“ On the other hand there are attractive national and international cultural institutions run by professional managers of cultural sites, who „as far as sponsors are concerned may be potentially interesting strategic partners, especially for organising events.“ He predicts that some cultural attractions will enjoy a glamorous career as mixed-use centres. By contrast, the outlook for not so marketable cultural attractions seems less rosy. Steinecke expects that „the focus of public attention will bypass many other cultural offerings. In terms of tourist numbers these institutions will lead a quiet life, collecting and preserving less spectacular art objects for future generations“ .

Globalisation creates new source markets

Prof. Dr. Harald Pechlaner of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt sees globalisation creating new opportunities as well as new risks for destinations which attract cultural tourism. „Globalisation creates an interest in new and faraway cultures, forcing local attractions into the background,“ is the tenor of the second introductory paper at the ITB Tourism and Culture Day, entitled “Culture as a tourism resource” . Pechlaner: „It also means that local culture attracts potential customers from distant source markets, putting it in contention in the global market.“

Destinations in Germany which attract cultural tourism are continuing to reap the benefits of global interest, rather than suffer from the pressures of competition. „Four million guests a year cannot be wrong“ is the figure proudly quoted by Hans Albert-Becker from Tourist-Info in Trier, as proof of the ancient Roman city's successful ability to attract tourists. This success story formed the basis of one of the introductory speeches at last year's annual conference of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Tourismuswissenschaft (DGT), of which Prof. Pechlaner is president. At the conference held in Trier in December of last year a large number of scientists discussed the general topic of „Culture as a tourism resource“ . Hidden beneath the surface of some of the PowerPoint presentations were some rather practical tips. On the subject of heritage tourism in Berlin presented by Berlin Tourismus Marketing GmbH (BTM), Fanny Raab's advice from the University of Trier was to be less coy about marketing the city's Socialist legacy. Foreign visitors, in particular the younger generation, took great interest in „the era of a divided Germany“ .

100,000 creatives in Berlin

„A new broom sweeps clean“ goes the popular saying. Thus it comes as no surprise that Burkhard Kieker, new head of BTM since early this year, and successor to Hanns Peter Nerger, is setting a new tone in his efforts to promote Berlin. „In future our attention will be directed increasingly towards organisers of conferences and congresses.“ With culture proving such a success, the new manager of BTM has no intention of tampering



with it. In future he wants to attract culturally interested tourists with BTM's arguments in the congress and conference market. His basic message is „value for money, because visitors to Berlin get the most for their money in comparison with other international destinations. Be it the cost of an overnight stay, a concert ticket, coffee or a ticket for public transport – in the German capital you definitely get your money's worth.“ (Kieker).

Berlin's trademark remains its unrivalled cultural appeal. In recent years demand for culture among guests visiting the capital has been on the rise, and Berlin's major cultural institutions have reported significant growth in visitor numbers from outside the city. That is no coincidence. Not only are there innumerable attractions in Berlin, 150 theatres and 170 museums (according to BTM press spokesman Christian Tänzler „...more museums than rainy days“), the city offers an atmosphere where art, culture and everything related to it can thrive. According to a newly released survey by Deutsche Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), 21,000 musicians, actors and performing artists live and work in the capital. To this figure can be added 80,000 Berliners in other creative occupations, designers and advertising specialists, for example. From 1998 to 2006 the number of creatives grew by 37 per cent, and according to DIW, in 2006 produced a turnover of 2.1 billion euros.

Churches for non-believers too

Back to the Gebeco survey. For more than 50 per cent of German tourists the most popular activities are walks, or in the case of cities a sightseeing tour, hiking, followed by visits to churches and monasteries. Museums and exhibitions are also popular (48.2 per cent), as are castles and palaces (42.3 per cent). Because of the importance of these attractions Steinecke has devoted several chapters to them in his book entitled „Cultural Tourism“. In the chapter entitled „The prospects for tourism and significance of churches, monasteries, mosques and temples“ he makes an interesting statement: „...From a spiritual point of view, churches, monasteries, mosques and temples can be important to non-believers too, as a haven of tranquillity and a place to leave one's daily routines behind.“ According to estimates by members of the catholic and protestant faiths, „in recent times there has been a veritable boom in religious tourism“. The reason is that „holy places give people an opportunity to reflect on human values and the meaning of life.“

The survey on cultural tourism states that older people take a much greater interest in art and are more curious than younger tourists. According to this argument, the prospects for cultural institutions and organisers of educational travel in years to come are good. As a result of demographic shifts older tourists are playing an increasingly important role in the travel market. Steinecke cautions that cultural attractions for tourists cannot be taken for granted. „Older, travel-hardened tourists expect easy-to-follow, lively presentations, not just raw data, figures and facts.“

That is music to the ears of Thomas Bohlander, managing director of Gebeco. „One of the principal tasks of a tour operator is to bring culture across in a contemporary manner.“ In particular, Gebeco focuses on arranging meetings and talks between hosts



and guests. In certain years they organise specific themes and contents, such as „ rivers – the lifeblood of cultures “ .

Asking tourists what their lasting impressions were of sights visited during their holidays produced some fascinating nuances. When tourists visit attractions 82.3 per cent want to see something new and impressive, but the main purpose is to see something different in their everyday lives (94.1 per cent). A pleasant, sophisticated atmosphere is appreciated (90.1 per cent), and when visiting sights they want to enjoy a nice day with their partner or family (84.3 per cent).

Bohlander: „ The task facing organisers of cultural tourism and tour operators in the future is to reproduce that kind of holiday experience.“ Savouring an authentic cultural experience is particularly important, something that Gebeco pays attention to, be it at a Pushkar festival in India or on a trip to a remote Catalan mountain region in Spain. Bohlander: „ Our guests can savour people’s vibrant everyday culture, far removed from museums.“

In addition to organisers of educational travel there are other German tour operators in the cultural tourism business. For example, in its „ Cultural tours schedule“ , published three times a year, Deutsche Bahn subsidiary Ameropa looks at topical cultural issues such as the new Dali museum in Berlin, or the new design of the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museums in Brunswick, and puts together travel packages accordingly. „ These are travel options for broad sections of the public“ , says Martin Katz, Managing Director of Ameropa. During the ITB Tourism and Culture Day he will be taking part in a podium discussion entitled „ Marketing tourism to capitals of culture“ . His position on the range of cultural tourism products offered by Ameropa is clear: „ We see it as indispensable.“



ITB Berlin Convention 2009 takes place from March 11 to 14, 2009 in halls 7.3, 7.1 a and 7.1 b. The first **ITB Tourism and Culture Day** is hosted in cooperation with the ITB partner region 2009 – **Ruhr.2010 European Capital of Culture**:

- 11.00 – 11.10: *Opening*
Hosted by: Prof. Dr. Ute Dallmeier, General Manager
Tourismus NRW e. V.
Dr. Wolfgang Isenberg, Director, Thomas-Morus-Academy Bensberg
- 11.10 – 11.30: *Culture as Tourism Resource*, Speaker: Prof. Dr. Harald Pechlaner, President, German Society for Research in Tourism (DGT e. V.), Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt
- 11.40 – 12.00: *What Role does Culture Play for the German Tourists? Results of A Recent Empirical Study (sponsored by Gebeco)*
Speaker: Prof. Dr. Albrecht Steinicke, University of Paderborn
- 12.15 – 13.15: *What Impact do Events in Cultural Capitals have on Tourism?*
Moderated by: Dr. Christiane Florin, Culture Editor, Rheinischer Merkur
Panel guests: Thomas Bohlander, Managing Director, Gebeco
Dr. Fritz Pleitgen, Managing Director, Ruhr.2010 GmbH
Sir Bob Scott, Executive Chairman, Capital of Culture Company Liverpool
- 13.30 – 14.15: *Culture, Tourism and the Media*, Speaker: Prof. Dr. Norbert Bolz, Media Scientist, Technische Universität Berlin
- 14.30 – 15.30: *Sales of Trips to Cultural Capitals*
Moderated by: Peter Hauptvogel
Panel guests: Martin Katz, Managing Director, Ameropa-Reisen GmbH
Burkhard Kieker, Managing Director, Berlin Tourismus Marketing GmbH BTM in spe
Mag. Martin Schobert, Head of Research & Development (CIO), Austrian National Tourist Office
Hasso von Düring, CEO, TUI Leisure Travel GmbH (TLT)

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