BBC

LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Click to join!

@BBCs_6MinuteEnglish

Subscribe to our Telegram channel for more!

BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Dark tourism

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Rob: Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob.

Neil: And I'm Neil. Hello.

Rob: Today we're talking about an unusual type of **tourism**. Tourism is the business of providing services such as transport, places to stay, or entertainment for people who are on holiday.

Neil: But instead of providing sunny holidays in a nice hotel by the sea – this is where tourists travel to sites of death, brutality and terror. It's being called 'dark tourism'. Rob, have you ever been to any dark tourist destination – or place?

Rob: Yes. I've visited Auschwitz in Poland – a fascinating trip to an obviously **depressing** place. And next month I'm planning to go to Chernobyl – the site of a **catastrophic** nuclear accident in 1986.

Neil: So these are not your typical sightseeing trips but a visit to places that make you **curious** because of their significance – their importance – in history?

Rob: Exactly. We'll talk more about this soon but not before I set you today's question. Robben Island in South Africa is one dark tourism destination. It's where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years. Do you know in which year it finally closed as a prison?

a) 1991
b) 1996
c) 1999

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2014

Neil: I don't know but I'm going to guess a) 1991 because I think he was released in 1989 and surely they would have shut it down pretty quickly after that.

Rob: I'll reveal the answer later. So let's talk more about 'dark tourism'. The word 'dark' is used here because it relates to places that are connected with bad or sinister things or things that could be considered **morally wrong**.

Neil: It's strange to want to visit places like these. There is what we call a **morbid fascination** – that's showing an interest in things connected with death and destruction. And these kinds of trips are on the increase.

Rob: Yes, there are organised tours to places like Ground Zero in New York, the killing fields in Cambodia and the nuclear power station in Chernobyl.

Neil: And there are the battlefields of World War I and II – and the top security prison of Alcatraz.

Rob: There are also plans to turn the disaster site of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan into a tourist destination – once the radiation is reduced.

Neil: But why do people want to visit these **macabre** sites? Well I mentioned curiosity and a chance to learn about history – but sometimes people just feel **compelled** to visit them.

Rob: But what about the **ethics** of dark tourism – is it wrong to make this trip? Are we not just **exploiting** – making money or cashing in on someone's suffering?

Neil: Doctor Phillip Stone is an expert in this subject. He's director of the Institute for Dark Tourism Research. He says this type of tourism isn't new – people have been visiting these types of places for years. He says it's always been there…

Doctor Phillip Stone, Director of the Institute for Dark Tourism Research:
It's not new in the sense that we are fascinated by other death and people's suffering. But it's how it's packaged up by the tourist industry.

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2014

Rob: So he says dark tourism isn't new. In fact a medieval execution was an early form of dark tourism. Maybe it's just **human nature** that draws us to these places? Doctor Stone says it's all about how these dark trips are packaged. So it depends how they are sold and how **tasteful** they are – are they sensitive to the horrors of what has taken place?

Neil: Yes, being able to walk around a historic site or visit a museum is one thing but how about staying in a former prison in Latvia and paying to be treated like a prisoner? Or how about crawling around Vietnamese war tunnels whilst people fire guns outside?

Rob: Maybe that is taking the experience too far. Doctor Stone says there is a "blurred line between **memorialisation** and tourism". He means it is hard to separate going to remember an event and the people who've died with visiting somewhere as part of a holiday.

Neil: Another issue when visiting these places is how you remember your visit – you must be **respectful** - perhaps taking photos, yes, but should you take a 'selfie'? And should you buy a souvenir or send a postcard home?

Rob: Well you certainly wouldn't write on your postcard 'wish you were here'. Anyway, let's now reveal the answer to the question I set you earlier.

Neil: Yes, this was about the former prison on Robben Island which is now a popular destination for dark tourism.

Rob: I asked you when it finally closed as a prison. Was it in:

a) 1991
b) 1996
c) 1999

Neil: I said 1991.

Rob: And you were wrong actually. It was in 1996. About 350,000 people now visit the site every year – which shows how much interest there is in a place that you would have once never wanted to go near. Is it somewhere you would like to visit Neil?

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2014

Neil: I'm not sure about dark tourism to be honest.

Rob: Ok Neil, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary we've heard today:

Neil: Yes, we heard:

tourism
depressing
catastrophic
curious
morally wrong
morbid fascination
macabre
compelled
ethics
exploiting
human nature
tasteful
memorialisation
respectful

Rob: Thanks. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon for 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

Both: Bye.

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2014

Vocabulary and definitions

tourism	the business of providing services such as transport, places to stay, or entertainment for people who are on holiday
depressing	making you feel unhappy and without hope
catastrophic	causing huge destruction or suffering
curious	interested in wanting to find out about things
morally wrong	against what is generally believed to be the right way of doing something
morbid fascination	an interest in things to do with death and destruction
macabre	unpleasant or shocking because they are related to death
compelled	doing something because you feel forced to or feel it has to be done
ethics	what is believed to be the right way to behave
exploiting	(here) using something for financial gain
human nature	the natural ways of behaving that most people share:
tasteful	showing good judgement about what is suitable
memorialisation	the act of honouring someone or an event
respectful	feeling or showing admiration for someone

Read and listen to the story online

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2014/05/140508_6min_dark_tourism.shtml

Related story:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17814100

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2014

BBC

LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Click to join!

@BBCs_6MinuteEnglish

Subscribe to our Telegram channel for more!