



## Symposium Abstracts

*Dark Tourism: Memory, Pilgrimage and the Digital Realm*

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Edinburgh Napier University  
Craiglockhart Campus, 219 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ

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## Gulag Interpretation and Visitation; The Case of Kazakhstan *(John Lennon and Guillaume Tiberghien)*

Kazakhstan is the location of some of the most important Gulag incarceration heritage sites from the Soviet period of domination. Despite the scale and severity of incarceration and loss of life commemoration, conservation and interpretation of Gulag sites is at best partial, visitation remains low and the attitude to this element of Kazakh history is (at best) ambiguous. This conference paper considers critical heritage sites and museums of the Gulag period in Kazakhstan and a qualitative case study approach is adopted to better understand the development and operation of Gulag tourism. Direct observations and qualitative document analysis of the major Kazakh Gulag museums and other important Gulag heritage sites was undertaken. Data from interviews with some 24 key stakeholders is also reported. This paper questions the orthodoxy inherent in the appeal of dark tourism sites and seeks to ascertain why domestic and international visitation remains low given the scale and importance of the Gulag incarceration narrative.

## Holocaust Tourism Digilantism on *Instagram* – a Performance Text (Phiona Stanley and Craig Wight)

Tourism scholarship has long considered tourists' consumption of "dark" tourism sites, including notions of appropriate or inappropriate engagement with Holocaust sites. However, less well documented is the intra-touristic gaze as related to Holocaust engagement. In particular, online identity work that uses tourist selfies in such spaces has yet to be adequately theorised. This study shows how complex intertextuality seems to mediate online identity performances, with viewer responses to Holocaust selfies on Instagram dependent on intersectional factors, including selfie-posters' gender, linguaculture, age, conventional attractiveness, attire, photographic pose, and accompanying caption. These factors come together to permit some and proscribe other Holocaust selfies; we propose a framework of tacit permission. This is theorised within Guy Debord's psychogeography and with reference to Judith Butler's work on the illegibility of identities that do not seem to fit extant roles.

## Edutainment Interpretation in Lighter Dark Tourism Experiences *(Brianna Wyatt)*

Interest in dark heritage tourism, commonly referred to as dark tourism, has grown exponentially since its conceptual development two decades ago, with particular growth as a subject for academic study at schools with programmes on heritage and tourism management. It is a subject inset with ethical issues and management challenges in practice. However, it can offer a wide range of experiences through interpretation and provocation, including opportunities to connect with difficult pasts, learning sessions on seemingly macabre topics, or thrilling adventures through fear-induced displays. This dichotomy of experiences not only underpins the discourse among academics and practitioners, but it also highlights the multidimensional and complex nature of interpreting dark heritage for diverse tourism audiences.

While existing dark tourism literature has explored various aspects of interpretation, much of this work appears heavily focused on challenges in balancing interpretation efforts with concerns for ensuring authenticity, and also managing ethical issues with interpreting past tragedies for packaged tourism purposes. Even more, much of these explorations have been conducted through single case study approaches at locations of the darkest nature that rely on non-personal, commemorative and/or educational interpretation methods. As a result, research and understanding is under-developed specifically relating to the use of edutainment interpretation at *lighter* dark tourism attractions. Given the proliferation of these types of attractions, which are more fun-centric in nature, and the growing public demand for more entertaining and hyper-real experiences, it is important to bring edutainment interpretation to the forefront of dark tourism research.

This presentation therefore discusses the use of edutainment within dark tourism. Accordingly, this presentation highlights varying examples lighter dark visitor attractions and explores their use of edutainment interpretation. In doing so, this presentation addresses the benefits of edutainment interpretation for visitor learning and understanding, thus promoting its continued use in future developments of dark tourism experiences.

## Pilgrimage By Proxy? Avoiding European Holocaust Tourism in Favor of Alternative Destinations of Commemoration *(Jeffrey S. Podoshen)*

This talk examines how some tourists specifically avoid tourism activity in European sites, and, instead, seek to engage in a more commemorative form of atrocity heritage at alternative sites located in North America and Israel. Reasons for European Holocaust avoidance include animosity, stereotyping of hosts, restoration of lost equity and a variety of psychological responses based on attribution. More recently, these reasons include increased anti-Semitism in Europe and a more fervent embrace of Holocaust denial and revisionist World War II history. Shifts in attitudes and community discourse about European Holocaust tourism will also be discussed as different groups of Holocaust tourists embrace different dispositions about this particular tourism activity. Larger issues involving atrocity tourism and simmering animosity will be discussed as well as more generalized implications for both tourism theorists and managers.

## Dark Tourism as a Peace Industry *(Tony Seaton, University of Bedfordshire)*

In the 1980s a seductive idea achieved wide circulation in international tourism circles. It was that tourism should be heralded as a major force for world peace. Its originator was Louis D'Amore, a consultant who promoted it as a campaign through his *Institute for Tourism as a Peace Industry* (ITPI) in Vermont. For nearly two decades it attracted support from academics, NTOs, industry bodies, and world opinion formers, including the Pope and Nelson Mandela. It was also the theme of several international conferences. In the new millennium the movement lost momentum and by the time D'amore died in 2021 it had few active supporters.

This paper re-assesses the concept, not in its original form as blanket endorsement of *all tourism*, but only in relation to certain features of *Dark Tourism*, notably its inherent functioning as encounters with collective remembrancing and public memorial at commemorative sites of war and peace. The appraisal is in three parts:

1. *The ITPI movement in retrospect*: its agendas, proponents, growth, and the reasons for its decline.
2. *Dark Tourism and the "politics of commemoration"*

Dark Tourism as remembrancing of national fatality, conflicts over public memorials, and the "missing" pasts of some sections of society including :

- a) Historic fatalities of *under-represented minorities* (e.g. ethnic, political, religious groups).
- b) *Under-represented fatalities of majorities* (e.g. occupational workers, civilian casualties of war).
- c) *The representation of significant others* commemorated positively in society, but later viewed as transgressive by individual, constitutive communities (especially, imperial figures).

3. *Programming Dark Tourism as vehicle for improving public awareness and proactive knowledge of the historic scale of different national and global fatalities, in the interests of peace and safety, within and outside countries.*

The programme agenda would include: *advocacy* of new memorial sites, events and narratives; *re-narrating* sites of contestation and conflict; seeking *links and affiliation* with compatible organisations : with UNESCO as an explicit "world heritage" theme; with national and regional "heritage" networks and organisations; with the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe; with the Jewish Holocaust network; with military veteran associations internationally. And by setting up international remembrance registers of fatalities sustained and inflicted by nations.

In brief, the mission is to orchestrate Dark Tourism as salutary encounters and texts, engaging visitors as citizens-of-the-world for peace, through continual *remembrancing* of the sorry legacies of armed conflicts.

## Edutainment for Dark Tourism: The 11 UNESCO World Heritage Australian Convict Sites *(Nicole Basaraba)*

From 1787 to 1868 approximately 166,000 men, women and children were transported to Australia to be penalised for crimes committed in the UK and Ireland. As a result of this transportation, many prisons were constructed, and the prisoners became the foundation of the UK's colonisation of Australia. In 2010, 11 Australian penal sites, out of the many built in the period, were recognised by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. This presentation will show how a prototyped interactive web documentary (iDoc) was developed as an “edutainment” proof of concept that provides cultural heritage tourists with a hub of historical content and narratives that are intended for exploration prior, post, or in lieu of visiting these dark tourism sites. The iDoc's production was built from a bottom-up approach to uncover themes and interests of previous tourists (i.e., the public) who have visited the 11 UNESCO sites. This netographic research, based on data from TripAdvisor, Instagram, and blogs, provided the narrative topics that gives the audience numerous paths to choose from—a digital “choose your own adventure” of dark tourism. Users select their own virtual tour (i.e., narrative path) and they ultimately decide where the story ends. This project demonstrated how the public can be considered early in the ‘edutainment’ story development process with the aim of increasing the likelihood that users will engage with it for a longer period, more than once, and share it with their social networks.



## *“Your house scared the life out of us”*: Ghost Hunting, Digital Storytelling, and the Construction of Dark Places (Rachael Ironside)

Supernatural stories are often entangled with sites of dark tourism. Ghosts, and the folklore from which they arise, are deeply rooted in tragic events, death, and human suffering. Due to the entertaining qualities of ghost tourism, it is frequently positioned as a lighter form of dark tourism (Lacanienta et al, 2020), however, others have argued that ghost tourism may possess different shades of darkness dependent on the experience produced (Fonseca, Seabra and Silva, 2015; Ironside, 2018). In the last two decades, the number of groups and events dedicated to hosting paranormal investigations have increased significantly (Eaton, 2020). As a result, places associated with ghost folklore including private homes, hotels, and heritage buildings, have become popular travel destinations due to their supernatural associations. The uncanny experiences of individuals and groups in these places are frequently reported, shared, and promoted online and through social media channels. This paper explores how ghost tourism shapes the way dark sites become seen and understood in relation to supernatural folklore. Specifically, the paper focuses on paranormal investigation as a form of dark tourism and considers how the practices of ‘ghost hunting’ construct and imbue sites with uncanny significance. By drawing upon the thematic analysis of digital content from two cases, *30 East Drive* and *The Ancient Ram Inn*, this paper considers how ghost hunting has transformed, a home and hotel respectively, into sites of dark tourism and reflects on the significance of digital storytelling to the construction of dark places.

## Commodifying the Corpse: Performative Resurrection and Re-victimisation of the Nameless Dead in New Orleans Ghost Tours (*Tia Price*)

New Orleans has been referred to as a 'city built on the dead' (Tour Guide, 2021) and studies of its tourism have looked at heritage, and post disaster Katrina tourism (Robbie, 2008). This research will discuss the use of walking ghost tours as a means of legitimising the visitor experience of corpse resurrection and consumption through text. This is demonstrated through participant observation of a walking ghost tour attended in December 2021, with specific focus on the legend of Delphine Lalaurie. This author argues that in the absence of objects and enclavic space, the walking tour must rely on tourists' relationship to the guide to reconstruct the scene of the crime and resurrect the corpse through visceral, and at times inaccurate, performative re-telling. Continuing the narrative of homologous slave identity and commodifying the corpse through mythic re-telling within heterogenous space, the attendee becomes complicit in the resurrection and commodification of the killer and the re-victimisation of the victim. Paratextual frames around the history-come-legend found online, and contemporary pop cultural trends, prepare the visitor to consume the corpse through a detached lens. This paper acknowledges the distinct absence of memorial to the identities of the dead outside of a sensationalist, consumptive frame which assigns the identity as victim as memorial ad infinitum. This research questions the ethics of providing a narrative whose emphasis relies on the continued resurrection, and misuse, of the victim corpse, reinforcing an arguably historic, Western cultural tendency to aggrandize the killer, and commodify the victim through text.

## The Pogrom of 1506: An Itinerary of Berequias Zarcos` Lisbon (*Bernardo Silvestre Dias, Sílvia Quinteiro, Maria Alexandra Rodrigues Gonçalves*)

Dark tourism is defined by Foley and Lennon as the presentation and consumption by tourists of attractions and products in places where events related to death and suffering took place (Foley & Lennon, 1996). When at the base of these attractions and products there are events (real or fictional) referred to in a literary work, dark tourism and literary tourism merge and generate a micro niche of cultural tourism: dark literary tourism. A micro niche that is characterized, therefore, by a double motivation, horror and the literary texts that depict it. This paper is part of a wider research which aims to show Lisbon's potential as a dark literary tourism destination, based on its History, its Literature, and its appeal as a tourist destination. Having these purpose in mind, one of the steps taken to test this hypothesis was the development of a dark literary itinerary for this city: "The Pogrom of 1506: an itinerary of Berequias Zarcos` Lisbon". This itinerary is based on Richard Zimler's novel *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon* (1996) and on the actual events that inspired the Luso-American writer, Lisbon's massacre of the Jewish of 1506. This paper will focus on the itinerary, on its structure and design, as well as on the theoretical Framework underlying the project, and on the employed methodology.

## Transforming Dark Tourism Exhibits for Future Audiences *(Linda Levitt)*

Millennials and members of Generation Z, digital natives who have been documenting their everyday lives from childhood forward, soon will be the primary dark tourism visitors. This constant documentation is intrinsically foundational to their lives, and especially in acts of witnessing, as seen in the infamous “Auschwitz selfie.” Dark tourism management can forestall this phenomenon of inappropriate representation by creating exhibitions that are participatory, performative, and experiential, transforming the event for visitors.

Following the argument from Adrian Franklin and Mike Crang that tourists aspire to be engaged rather than passive spectators, experiences of identification can connect visitors to sites and their narratives. One example is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which gives every visitor an identification card representing an individual who lived in Europe during the Holocaust. USHMM’s significant online content also establishes a connection with potential tourists. Together, these participatory programs exemplify means of adapting to changes for the future of dark tourism.

Both at the museum and in the museum’s digital presence, stories of survivors and of those murdered during the Holocaust provide a narrative foundation for identification and compassion. Jonathan Cohen writes that identification is “a process that culminates in a cognitive and emotional state in which the audience member is aware not of him- or herself as an audience member, but rather imagines being one of the characters in the text.” This project looks at methods for dark tourism sites to create meaning through identification for audiences to connect themselves to heritage and the past.

## Disrupting the Metaverse with Educational XR: A Case Study of Lipke Bunker VR (*Raivis Sīmansons, Diāna Popova, Elizabete Grinblate*)

24 months ago few museums across the globe deliberately invested in virtual reality (VR). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed just about everything in this respect: museums large and small rushed to explore new digital technologies as a substitute for physical on-site-visits. VR as a means of communicating museum highlights is on the rise, especially in the arts world. Less pronounced, though, has been targeted use of VR by memorial museums and dark heritage sites as a research and interpretation tool. The award-winning Anne Frank House Secret Annex VR is one such example. A typological prototype which encouraged a small memorial museum in Riga dedicated to a Latvian dockworker Žanis Lipke who rescued more than 50 people during the Nazi occupation, to embark on a journey of developing its own proof-of-the-concept VR. An interactive 3D experience of a similar historic hideout. Should the VR indeed become the “Netflix of Museums” (Hon 2016) which will effectively replace physical visiting by consuming digital content at home, there is an urgent need for good practice examples for the heritage sector. This paper will look at the underlying curatorial concept and the methodology of developing the Lipke Bunker VR which demonstrates a grassroots approach leading from a hackathon, experimental partnerships, digital co-working, on-site-testing and user experience evaluation towards an eventual end product. Particular attention will be paid to the outcomes of the empathy mapping which was used in finding out the perception and expectations of the Lipke Bunker VR experience by selected focus groups.

Hon, A. (2016, August 11). VR will break museums. Medium. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://medium.com/@adrianhon/vr-will-break-museums-794bfaa78ce4>

Žanis Lipke Memorial. (2021, June 10). Lipkes bunkurs VR MP4. YouTube. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoYvtzl5k7E>

## Unpacking Dark Tourism Motivations: Framing Places of Mafia in South Italy

*(Lorenza Gerardi, Fabiola Sfodera)*

Over the last twenty years, the interest in visiting places associated with death and disasters has grown along with exponential growth in the offer of dark tourism sites and attractions, such as an increase in searches to destinations associated with death and suffering in the UK and an increase in flight searches for Chernobyl since 2016. Dark tourism is an umbrella concept commonly associated with post-disaster destinations or manmade disaster sites. While mafia sites could be easily associated with dark tourism, the extant literature hasn't yet explored how tourists' motivations can frame mafia places and attractions in the dark tourist gaze. Additionally, whilst dark tourism allows tourists to contemplate death as a distant phenomenon, the touristification of mafia places is perceived as quite different and, in some ways, dangerous, in countries where mafia organizations are still heavily active. From a thanatological perspective, tourists could experience an additional measure of perceived risk and worry for their own mortality when visiting these places. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to expand and to update dark tourism taxonomy by addressing mafia tourism as a new form of dark tourism driven by a significant morbid fascination for one's death. This study developed a multi-method approach consisting of content analysis to explore tourists' expectations through Trip Advisor comments, and semi-structured interviews to understand dark tourism motivations at Palermo No-Mafia Memorial Museum and Salemi Mafia Museum, in Sicily, Italy.

## Crime Tourism: Exploring Visitor Motivations, Screen Tourism and Dark Fandoms *(Simon McFadden)*

This proposed paper/presentation focuses on dark tourist motives and visitor interpretations. With particular interest in the former, this paper outlines frameworks which attempt to explain tourist incentives for visiting conventional tourist attractions and considers how these theories apply to or deviate from dark tourist motivations. Moreover, this paper outlines general theories pertaining to dark tourist travel motivations as well as existing findings concerning visitor motivations at specific dark tourist sites.

Utilising this as an opportunity to present on the researcher's ongoing PhD project, this paper considers the impact of screen tourism as a motivation for visiting dark tourist locations. This includes the discussion of existing findings in research relating to screen tourism and dark tourism as well as the discussion of gaps in research and avenues for further research in this area – including some of the gaps which the present PhD study aims to address. This PhD study notably aims to ascertain the extent to which screen induced tourism impacts the consumption of crime tourism.

Furthermore, in considering exploration into the consumers (or potential consumers) of dark tourism, this paper discusses findings relating to online “dark fandoms” – another area of focus in the present PhD project. This section of the paper argues a link between the two niche fields of study (dark tourism and dark fandom) and examines the potential role that social media and online discussion forums play in stimulating growth in the dark tourist industry. This section should include the findings from a survey (or at least a pilot survey) on dark fandoms.

## On the Digitization and Gamification of Punitive (In)justice: The Enrollment of the Public in Penalty in Canadian Police and Prison Museums *(Justin Piché, Kevin Walby)*

In Canada and other settler colonial countries, there is a growing recognition that the violence of policing and imprisonment is chiefly directed at Indigenous, Black and other racialized peoples, along with other populations pushed to the margins. While budgets for more police and prison officers, equipment, and infrastructure continue to grow nonetheless, so too do the number of people questioning the legitimacy of policing and incarceration as a response to social harm. It is against this backdrop of carceral expansion and critique that digital displays and games have become core features of in-person and online policing and prison museums. These games and interactive displays are curated and featured to entice more visitors to visit these dark tourism spaces. Drawing on more than a decade of fieldwork in penal history museums in Canada, this paper explores the emergence of the digitization and gamification of punitive (in)justice in these settings and the role these exhibits play in shoring-up the legitimacy of the Canadian carceral state. We focus on case studies of digital and game-based displays at four penal history museums, exploring how the cultural representations of 'justice' curated by museum staff and conveyed to visitors through digital displays and games not only steer clear of the harms of policing and imprisonment, but aim to immerse and enroll penal spectators in the project of penalty in numerous ways, including as prospective recruits for employment in the fields of policing and 'corrections'. The paper concludes with a discussion about the implications of this trend for research and community organizing that aims to work towards challenging, dismantling, and building alternatives to the carceral state within and beyond Canada.

## Dark Tourism and the Gladiatorial Impulse *(Lindsay Steenberg)*



While there has been a recent notable spike in scholarly and popular interest in the practice of dark tourism, it is widely acknowledged that it is not a new invention. Philip Stone highlights that, '[e]arly examples of dark tourism may be found in the patronage of Roman gladiatorial games. With death and suffering at the core of the gladiatorial product, and its eager consumption by raucous spectators, the Roman Colosseum may be considered one of the first dark tourist attractions' (2006, p.147).

This paper focuses on the gladiatorial impulse as an illuminating and sustained example of dark tourism that has shifted in response to historical changes, but remained remarkably and curiously consistent. After briefly mapping the gladiatorial scenario as a tourist attraction, this presentation interrogates two different expressions of gladiatorial tourism: the educational veneer used to justify its practice, what I have labelled a *Horrible Histories* effect and the self-improvement rhetoric central to gladiatorial fitness regimes and the combat sports out of which they emerge. Education and self-improvement constitute an embodied and personal form of dark tourism that is underpinned by digital media technologies that permit the tourist to remain rooted in their bodies and homes, while virtually travelling or experiencing a taste of gladiatorial spectacle.

This research project develops academic theory in relation to the novel subject area that is “dark tourism festivals”. Dark tourism sites and activities can be plotted along a dark tourism continuum, ranging from “darkest” to “lightest”. This area of research, dark tourism festivals, is located at the lighter end of this spectrum, as these festivals are not very death- or tragedy-oriented. Instead, dark tourism festivals are focused on fun and culture, utilising the macabre as an entertainment theme.

This study will present initial findings on how creative practices are used at dark tourism festivals. At the Whitby Goth Weekend for example, participants take ownership of the festival experience by engaging in creative practices such as dressing up in elaborate costumes and posing for photographs in staged environments. Festival participants do not just simply experience the festival, they also become part of a co-creation process. This co-creation takes place in contexts of culture, art and the macabre, where spaces are specifically managed to enable creative practices. Whitby Abbey and its surrounding graveyard for example serve as a backdrop that encourages the positioning of gothic “actors”, a process which encourages photography and performance. Additional creative performance elements are encouraged in other festival spaces, such as in atmospheric locations, at the festival music venues and in retail spaces. Hospitality spaces in particular enable shared experiences among participants. This research seeks to analyse how the use of creative practices at dark tourism festivals influences performance and assists with the co-creation of experiences.

Here We Are Waiting for You: Dark Tourism at Brasilia’s Campo da Boa Esperança Cemetery (*Nayara Gúercio*)

The aim of this presentation is to ask whether the Campo da Boa Esperança Cemetery, located in the city of Brasilia - Brazil, could become an alluring tourist attraction comparable to Sao Paulo's Consolação Cemetery. The focus of this presentation lies on: 1) the Consolação Cemetery, which features the tombstones of internationally acclaimed Brazilian artists such as Mário de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral, as well as works of art designed by Bruno Giorgi and Victor Brecheret, and 2) the Campo da Boa Esperança Cemetery, which features the tombstones of former Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira and renowned actress Dulcina de Moraes. This is a basic exploratory research that builds on Derrida's (1996) and Foley&Lennon's (2000) work by discussing the connections between art, tourism, human memory and archival practices. It is comparative in nature, as the data collection methods in this research were: 1) the systematic observations of both burial grounds and 2) the analysis of tourists' reviews on the websites TripAdvisor.com and Yelp.com.br. It is concluded that the Campo da Boa Esperança Cemetery, as opposed to the Consolação Cemetery, is considered to be an almost inexistent alternative form of tourism, timidly encouraged by tourists and forgotten by the local government. It is noted that, with proper planning and investment, it is possible to boost dark tourism in the city of Brasilia by offering it to the public as a new and feasible option for both leisure and national cultural appreciation.

## Festivalisation and Modelling the Macabre: Proposing a Typology for Dark Event Tourism *(Hannah Stewart)*

Society exists within a sensationalised and media-driven market where the historical and cultural implications of death are becoming increasingly diluted. More and more, people are in search of

experiences that allow them to indulge in the macabre in a less violent and more socially acceptable way. Existent dark tourism literature frequently references specific destinations or attractions embedded in variations of dark tourism subscriptions. Such places include various forms of tourism including battlefield tourism, slavery-heritage tourism, Holocaust tourism, visitation to sites of manufactured death such as UK Dungeon attractions and visitation to major disaster sites such as Ground Zero, Rwanda and the Cambodian Killing Fields. Some academics argue the existence of a differentiation between 'dark' and 'darker' types of tourism, proposing that sites *of* death are darker than sites *associated* with death. Seldom mentioned are the pilgrimages made to attend festivals or events of the same dark nature. Festivals and events such as Mexico's Kots Kaal Pato, Roswell's *UFO Festival* and Madagascan mortuary festivals are prolific considerations for the creation of the sub-niche specialty of Dark Tourism – Dark Event Tourism (DET). DET favours the visual and experiential over historicity and is defined as the consumption of periodic events or festivals related to or dominated by the theme of death, tragedy or the macabre, based on any historical timeline.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to critically examine the anthropology of death and explore how various cultures process death and its meaning through the festivalisation of historic atrocities. As a result, this work will lend itself to the creation of a typology/blueprint for dark events, Thanatourism and placemaking based on empirical data collected; it will reflect gradations of perceived 'darkness', highlighting a festival's ability to offer festivalgoers the seductive allure of fantasy, illusion, reflection and consumption of the macabre.