
Dark Tourism

A Guide to Resources

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When I began receiving topic ideas for the Alert Collector column in 2016, Rebecca Price's submission for a column on "dark tourism" caught my attention, mostly because of its novelty. I had a sense of what the topic entailed, and it turns out to be even more fascinating than I suspected. Why do some people like to visit the sites of tragedies? What is the attraction of ghost tours? Why are memorials popular destinations for tourists? This relatively new field of dark tourism crosses into many different disciplines, as you will see in the column that follows. While not all librarians may be rushing to create collections around this topic, the items may fill other collection needs in sociology, anthropology, and other areas. Price is an adjunct research and instruction librarian at Duquesne University and a doctoral candidate in social and comparative analysis at the University of Pittsburgh. As a member of a University of Pittsburgh research team studying children's experiences at dark sites, Price has published several peer-reviewed articles about dark tourism.—*Editor*

Why do tourists share selfies from places of tragedy? How do cemetery and prison tours reflect chosen narratives? These are just two of the many questions addressed by the study of "dark tourism." While readers might not recognize the phrase, it describes a common activity. Each year, millions of people travel to gaze at battlefields, cemeteries, memorials, monuments, places where famous people died, or places where others were enslaved.¹ Dark tourism destinations cover a broad spectrum, ranging from entertaining ghost tours to concentration camps and sites of terror attacks.² While visitors are motivated by a variety of reasons, dark tourism destinations represent "death, suffering, or the seemingly macabre."³

In the 1990s, Foley and Lennon were among the first to name dark tourism as an area of research.⁴ Yet dark tourism as an activity has gone on for centuries. For example, think of pilgrims traveling to view relics associated with martyrs, or crowds attending public executions. Sometimes called "thanatourists" or "heritage tourists," these tourists visit places of death, atrocity, disaster, terrorism, and other forms of human suffering—and some argue that dark tourism is growing in popularity.⁵

Social media has added a new twist to tragedy as tourist attraction. Now, tourists post selfies at sites of tragedy and human suffering, like the recent example of the disastrous fire at London's Greenfell Tower.⁶ Social media posts like these lead to public responses, including outrage. These

public reactions generate additional headlines and heated online debates.⁷

All of this attention has caused dark tourism, once strictly the domain of academics in tourism and heritage studies, to receive attention from researchers and students across disciplines. In the last decade, published dark tourism studies have focused primarily on defining the concept and its scope, exploring the political nature of tourist experiences, analyzing tourist motivations and experiences, and exploring the influences of different stakeholders from a management perspective.⁸ It is also worth noting dark tourism's obvious connection to museum libraries and historical archives. Other libraries have found themselves dealing with dark tourism in a practical sense. One example is the Dallas Public Library's evolution into a memorial destination and archive of the artifacts that people leave behind, known as "tributes."⁹

Recently, researchers and students from across disciplines have begun exploring dark tourism from a variety of perspectives. These researchers represent disciplines as varied as anthropology, architecture, criminology, cultural studies, education, ethics, geography, performance studies, policy studies, psychology, and sociology, to name a few. For example, students and faculty members research how memorials are designed and why. Others explore the perspectives of people involved in or affected by dark tourism; this includes child tourists and locals who live near dark tourism destinations. Still others study the history of ghost and prison tours and how they perpetuate narratives of power and control. Research topics are varied and reflect the global, multidisciplinary nature of dark tourism research. According to Philip R. Stone, executive director of the Institute for Dark Tourism Research at the University of Central Lancashire, dark tourism scholarship should "continue to shine a critical light on how societies deal with and present their dead, and in doing so, offer multidisciplinary discourse on the darker side of travel."¹⁰

This multidisciplinary conversation is reflected in the list of resources presented in this article. This guide provides a starting point for anyone who wants to build a foundational collection for dark tourism research. This is by no means an exhaustive bibliography, but it provides the basic tools needed for starting a dark tourism research project.

BOOKS AND REFERENCE

Titles in this section represent the most relevant works published in dark tourism since 2007. Items were selected by considering citation counts, positive reviews in *CHOICE: Reviews for Academic Libraries* and other relevant journals, and publication date. The relative newness of dark tourism as a research area and its interdisciplinary nature mean that there is currently only one (forthcoming) dedicated reference source. Items in this section are listed in alphabetical order by author.

Reference

Stone, Philip R., Rudi Hartmann, Tony Seaton, Richard Sharpley, and Leanne White, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*. London: Routledge, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-137-47565-7.

Available for preorder at time of writing, this book promises to provide the definitive reference text for dark tourism. Edited by some of the best-known researchers in dark tourism studies, this book will offer a multidisciplinary exploration of the phenomenon through the lenses of anthropology, business management, cultural studies, death studies, geography, heritage tourism studies, history, museology, philosophy, politics, psychology, religious studies, and sociology.

Books

Dalton, Derek. *Dark Tourism and Crime*. London: Routledge, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-415-64351-1.

Based on the author's empirical and ethnographic research, this book introduces the phenomenon of dark tourism as depicted at various settings. Having conducted research at locations as varied as Birkenau concentration camp and the remnants of mass murder under the Pinochet regime in Chile, Dalton graphically depicts the violence memorialized at each location, and the depictions of human suffering that continue to draw tourists to the scene of the crime.

Hooper, Glenn, and J. John Lennon, eds. *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4724-5243-6.

J. John Lennon was one of the first researchers to define dark tourism. In this recent compilation, the editors highlight the complex interdisciplinary nature of dark tourism research. Covering a range of issues from management to the humanities, this book includes chapters related to community involvement, ethics, and motivation. A wide range of case studies draws on the expertise of academics and practitioners.

Korstanje, Maximiliano. *The Rise of Thana-Capitalism and Tourism*. New York: Routledge, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-138-20926-8.

Informed by perspectives in sociology, behavior studies, and cultural studies, this book explores the motivations of the "death-seekers," tourists who seek out disaster and tragedy. Timely focus is given to those visitors who take selfies at sites of disaster. This book also explores the economic implications of tragedy-consuming tourists and the associated rise in "thana-capitalism": literally, the business of death.

Kullstroem, Chris. *Drawn to the Dark: Explorations in Scare Tourism Around the World*. Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4556-2294-8.

This popular travelogue recounts the journey of one writer who voyaged around the world to chase the dark

tourism experience. Author Chris Kullstroem chronicled her quest as she visited several countries in search of festivals, attractions, and eerie reenactments to celebrate with locals. Through documenting her experiences, this entertaining account illustrates how dark tourism can evoke emotions that transcend language and cultural barriers, revealing connections that all humans share.

Le Carrer, Olivier, and Sibylle Le Carrer. *Atlas of Cursed Places: A Travel Guide to Dangerous and Frightful Destinations*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-63191-000-5.

This *New York Times* bestseller offers an armchair history of some of the most fascinating dark tourism destinations around the world. Including vintage maps and period illustrations, this book offers brief introductions to the fascinating stories behind forty dark tourism destinations. It is suitable for general readers with an interest in dark tourism destinations around the world.

Miles, Tiya. *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-4696-2633-8.

Historian Miles explores the folklore presented at “ghost tours,” which frequently exploit slave stories for capitalistic gain. Examining popular sites and stories from these tours, Miles argues that haunted tales routinely appropriate and skew history to produce representations of slavery for commercial gain. Examples include emphasizing sexual relationships between white masters and black slave women, graphically portraying physical torture of black bodies, and eroticizing African religious practices. Miles uses these ghost tours to emphasize public hunger for exoticism and violence, and the persistence of disturbing attitudes about the Civil War and race.

Sather-Wagstaff, Joy. *Heritage that Hurts: Tourists in the Memoriscapes of September 11*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-4696-2633-8.

In this book, anthropologist Sather-Wagstaff explores the contested meanings of memorials. Setting her research within the context of New York City after September 11, the author explores how tourists construct understandings of the social, political, and emotional effects of traumatic events. Comparing this site to other dark tourism destinations, including the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the author explores how these places become meaningful to individuals and communities on a larger scale.

Sharpley, Richard, and Philip R. Stone, eds. *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*. Bristol, UK: Channel View, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-84541-115-2.

Sharpley and Stone are widely cited and considered among the original theorists of dark tourism research. In this edited book, researchers provide an introductory

investigation into dark tourism theory. Chapters explore issues related to the development, management, and interpretation of dark sites and attractions, focusing particularly on the relationship between dark tourism and the cultural condition and social institution of contemporary societies.

Welch, Michael. *Escape to Prison: Penal Tourism and the Pull of Punishment*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-520-28615-3.

This book explores the motivation of tourists to explore a certain kind of dark tourism destination: prisons and former prisons. Using Foucault as a guide, Welch explores why people are drawn to gaze upon the suffering of others. At the same time, the book explores the roles of prisons and each site’s historical ties to punishment, slavery, and control.

White, Leanne, and Frew, Elspeth, eds. *Dark Tourism and Place Identity: Managing and Interpreting Dark Places*. London: Routledge, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-415-80965-8.

Written from the perspective of researchers in tourism management and site interpretation, this edited volume provides case studies from around the world. Chapters are presented in three sections: visitor motivation, destination management, and place interpretation. Case studies present international contemporary and historic sites associated with death, disaster, and atrocity and their association with tourism. The book also explores the related issues of marketing, management, and interpretation of contemporary and historic sites.

Willis, Emma. *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and Ethical Spectatorship: Absent Others*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-137-32265-4.

From the perspective of cultural and performance scholarship, Willis explores dark tourism as a performance in which the tourist plays a part. The author argues that theatricality has a vital role to play in helping contemporary people think beyond violence and self to engage with those who are now absent. Digging deep into the ethics of spectatorship of tragedy, the author explores how presenting tragic settings and reenactments can be an act of memorial and an attempt to understand the experiences of others.

Wilson, Jacqueline Z. *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-4331-0279-0.

With this book, Wilson addresses a fundamental question: does the interpretation and presentation of penal tourism destinations include and fairly represent the personal stories of individuals associated with prisons? Wilson argues that to perpetuate the “official story,” the personal stories of prison inmates have been excluded and distorted. While presented in an Australian context, Wilson’s arguments about power, control, and collective memory apply to dark tourism destinations worldwide.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

The titles contained in this section are scholarly, peer-reviewed periodicals. These journals have published many articles on dark tourism and related topics. Journals were identified by searches in Scopus and Web of Science, followed by searches of the journals themselves. Full-text and abstracting and indexing information was retrieved from *Ulrichsweb Global Serials Directory*, and database information is provided for those that provide complete or near-complete coverage. Journals are listed in descending order by relevance, with those publishing the greatest number of dark tourism related articles listed first.

Annals of Tourism Research. Oxford, UK: Pergamon, 1973-. Bi-monthly. ISSN: 0160-7383.

Annals is a social-sciences journal focusing on academic perspectives of tourism. Dedicated to developing theory, it publishes original articles dealing with anthropological, business, economic, educational, environmental, geographic, historical, political, psychological, philosophical, religious, and sociological aspects of tourism. Full text is available in multiple Elsevier databases. It is abstracted and indexed in GEOBASE, GeoRef, Scopus, and multiple CABI and Thomson Reuters databases.

Journal of Heritage Tourism. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006-. Quarterly. ISSN: 1743-873X.

This transdisciplinary journal focuses on all aspects of visits to sites of historical importance. It publishes original articles examining aspects of heritage tourism such as colonial heritage, commodification, contested heritage, education, ethnicity, folklore, funding, historic sites, identity, indigenous heritage, interpretation, marketing, nostalgia, patriotism, power, and religious tourism. Full-text articles may be found in multiple Taylor & Francis databases. It is abstracted and indexed in Scopus and multiple CABI, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest databases.

Tourism Management. Oxford, UK: Pergamon, 1980-. Bi-monthly. ISSN: 0261-5177.

This journal targets an international audience of academics and practitioners concerned with policy, planning, and management of travel and tourism. It publishes primary research articles, discussions of current issues, case studies, reports, and book reviews. Full text is available in multiple Elsevier databases. It is abstracted and indexed in GEOBASE and multiple CABI and Thomson Reuters databases.

Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2003-. Quarterly. ISSN: 1476-6825.

This transdisciplinary, transnational journal focuses on the changes caused by travel and effects on biodiversity, cultural diversity, cultures, economies, and sustainability. It publishes original research articles that critically examine the relationships, tensions, representations, conflicts, and

possibilities that exist between tourism/travel and cultures in an increasingly complex global context. Full text is available in multiple Taylor & Francis databases. Abstracts and indexes are available in multiple CABI, EBSCOhost, and Thomson Reuters databases.

Current Issues in Tourism. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1998-. 16 times/yr. ISSN: 1368-3500.

This interdisciplinary journal encourages discussion between new and experienced researchers and practitioners worldwide. It publishes applied and theoretical work, including papers, commentaries, letters, and reviews that emphasize theory, concepts, frameworks, methods, models, and practices in the study of tourism. Full text is available in multiple Taylor & Francis databases. It is abstracted and indexed in several CABI, EBSCOhost, Elsevier, ProQuest, and Thomson Reuters databases.

Tourism Recreation Research. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1976-. Quarterly. ISSN: 0250-8281.

This multidisciplinary international journal focuses on research problems in tourism and attempts to seek solutions for sustainable development. It publishes original research, "post-published" reviews of papers previously presented in the journal, and book reviews. Full text is available in several Taylor & Francis databases. It is abstracted and indexed in multiple CABI and EBSCOhost databases.

International Journal of Tourism Research. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley, 1995-. Bi-monthly. ISSN: 1099-2340.

This international journal is devoted to promoting and enhancing research developments in the field of tourism. It publishes research papers including literature reviews and empirical studies in any field of interest to tourism researchers, including economics, marketing, sociology, and statistics. Full text is available in multiple Wylie databases. It is abstracted and indexed in GEOBASE and multiple CABI, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Thomson Reuters databases.

Tourist Studies. London, UK: Sage, 2001-. 3 times/yr. ISSN: 1468-7976.

This multidisciplinary journal uses a global viewpoint to explore critical perspectives on the nature of tourism as a cultural phenomenon. It publishes theoretical analyses of contemporary problems and issues in tourism studies, qualitative analyses of tourism and the tourist experience, reviews linking theory and policy, interviews with scholars, review essays, and notes on conferences and other events of topical interest to the field of tourism studies. Full text is available in multiple Sage databases. It is abstracted and indexed in PsycINFO and multiple CABI, EBSCOhost, and Thomson Reuters databases.

International Journal of Heritage Studies. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1994-. 10 times/yr. ISSN: 1352-7258.

This interdisciplinary journal publishes original research articles of interest to scholars and practitioners, encouraging

debate over the meaning and nature of heritage and its links to memory, identity, and place. Articles include emergent issues from fields such as anthropology, cultural geography, cultural studies, design, heritage studies, history, interpretation, law, memory studies, museum studies, sociology, and tourism studies. Full text is available in multiple Taylor & Francis databases. It is abstracted and indexed in Scopus and multiple CABI, EBSCOhost, Gale, and Thomson Reuters databases.

WEB RESOURCES

This section contains a selection of web resources related to dark tourism research. Websites included in this column represent national associations that provide free, online resources for dark tourism researchers. Websites were evaluated on the basis of relevance, authority, depth of coverage, and timeliness. They are listed in alphabetical order. In addition to the resources listed here, students and researchers should explore the websites of dark tourism destinations related to their research topics. Many, such as those for national museums and memorials, offer primary source materials and other helpful research tools.

American Association for State and Local History (www.aaslh.org)

Founded in 1940, this is the national association for professionals who preserve and interpret state and local history, with the goal of making the past more meaningful for all people. The website offers a searchable online collection of more than one thousand resources, some of which are freely accessible. The site also offers a customizable Your Feed feature, which allows users to access news stories, resources, and upcoming events relating to their interests.

American Alliance of Museums (www.aam-us.org)

Founded in 1906 as the American Association of Museums, this organization represents more than thirty-five thousand museums and museum workers, as well as related partners. It has the goal of developing standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. This website includes an "About Museums" section that provides statistics about museums, including what kinds of museums exist and how many people visit them, as well as

standards, ethics, and resources. The website also includes information for those interested in starting museums.

National Association for Interpretation (www.interpnet.com)

This nonprofit association is dedicated to serving the profession of heritage interpretation, which has more than five thousand members in Canada and the United States. This association represents heritage interpreters, people who employ a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings of the place. Of special interest, the site offers free online access to the *Journal of Interpretation Research*, a scholarly research journal featuring studies related to issues in interpretation. This open-access, peer-reviewed journal publishes two issues per year. Prior articles have included dark tourism related topics such as "hot interpretation": the interpretation of controversial sites and interpreting terrorism for children.

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