

ERIH Berlin Presentation

International Tourism/It's all in the Mix:

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The Aim of ERIH is the sustainable development of our European Industrial Heritage to help cultural identity and secure the economic and social regeneration of former industrial areas, by the protection of former industrial sites and their promotion as visitor attractions.

Over the last 20 years industrial heritage has grown rapidly to become a major sector of tourism attracting many millions of visitors per year throughout Europe. ERIH is now a recognised brand of quality for tourists interested in the industrial heritage of Europe. The ERIH website, our main promotional tool now attracts more than 1.5 million hits per annum. This is a story of success in The development of industrial heritage tourism as a major sector of tourism and its contribution to urban regeneration is a story of success, but this is no time for complacency.

The aim of this conference is to look forward and consider how growth in European industrial tourism can be further increased by linking with other sectors of tourism to provide an enriching overall visitor experience.

In 2018 ERIH in cooperation with the Regionalverband Ruhr carried out a survey of industrial heritage sites/an Industrial Heritage Barometer and found that 60% of visitors came from the region, 30% from their respective country and 10% were international visitors. This confirms Industrial heritage sites are at present mostly a regional attraction, usually for visitors within about 1 to 1.5 hour drive. Sites provide a focus for local interest and activities with significant importance as an educational resource. The ERIH 2019 Heritage Barometer confirms the international percentage of visitors is still 10%.

This static position contrasts with the spectacular growth in international tourism world-wide and offers the opportunity of shifting the balance towards more international visitors to our sites. The visitor trends graph published by the UNWTO shows the huge growth in international tourist arrivals up to 2018. Within this growth the UNWTO report stated that "tourist arrivals in Europe reached 713 million in 2018, a notable 6% increase over an exceptionally strong 2017. ---- Based on current trends this is expected to grow by 3% to 4% this year."

Most of these visitors will have clear priority of what they want to do or see, possibly a "bucket list" usually of iconic internationally recognised sites or experiences. How can we encourage them to visit industrial heritage sites during their stay? The challenge is to

include industrial heritage as part of wider planned visits in which promoters and providers are involved, especially the major providers in the private sector.

At present there are some good examples of industrial heritage being integrated with other sectors of tourism, as we will hear from today's speakers, but it is generally true to say that industrial heritage sites are not at present promoted seriously by leading tourism promoters, providers and tour operators. Typically in a 20 page weekly Travel Supplement in the Sunday Times, probably the UK's leading Sunday Paper, on 22nd September 2019 there is not one reference to an industrial heritage attraction despite nearly all the cruises and railway tours advertised including excursions to local sites of interest to augment their main journey.

This is not because of the lack of potential. There is plenty potential for visits to industrial heritage sites linked to cruises and railway journeys. For example Rhine river cruises to Dusseldorf could include visits to many major sites within easy reach including Zollverein World Heritage Site. Links to other interest tours are also possible for example popular "Tulip Tours" in the Netherlands could include the The Cruquis Pumping Station, an ERIH Anchor Point with a near-by quality restaurant situated beside a canal.

Industrial links between European industries which started the Industrial Revolution and overseas countries foreign lands which followed could be exploited such as the close links in jute production between Dundee in Scotland and Bengal in India. Interestingly more than a billion jute sandbags were exported from Bengal for the trenches in the First World War.

The vast majority of international visitors have no initial interest in industrial history but might be encouraged to a site because of a unique experience such as an underground tour or on site re-enactments. They may also simply be attracted to sites that include provision for their particular personal interests such as good food, artworks or links with well known TV characters such as Poldark. Visitor strategies for industrial heritage sites must therefore provide interest beyond the interpretation of the main historic significance and consider how a visit to former industrial sites might complement and enhance other tourism offers.

There are basically three questions for us to consider at today and in the future:

How can we engage more with major tourism promoters and providers, especially tour operators?

How can industrial heritage sites engage more with other sectors of tourism?

How can we make our sites attractive to a fast growing, well travelled, post industrial multi cultural society?

These are the issues we need to resolve if we are to maximise the potential for economic and social benefit from our European industrial heritage.

“Lets get in the mix”

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