

Bulletin 9: Social tourism approach: Discover a city with homeless people

What can we offer in our regions?

This week, we will present you the concept of homeless city tours.

Homeless city tours - what is it?

Homeless city tours are alternative guided tours where homeless people show tourists their city. The guidance enables tourists to get a very individual and eye-opening impression of the city not only for visitors but also for citizens who want to discover the city's new facets. It is not the intention to promote homeless people as touristic attractions rather than support their reintegration in society and giving them a responsible task. These



Source: <http://www.travelettes.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/unseen-tours.jpg>

guided tours represent new challenging activities for the homeless that enable them of having a job and income. Furthermore, it encourages them to reintegrate themselves in society, accept responsibility and gives them a stronger feeling of confidence.

Additionally the city tours interweave the homeless guides' own stories and experiences and introduce a new social consciousness and authenticity into the walking tours. The tours allow tourists to have a different view of the city, a view that also refers to a city's dark side. Tourists as well as locals can experience the city from a different perspective. Furthermore, the common experience of the city tour and the dialogue between homeless people and visitors contribute to a reciprocal appreciation and enable the homeless to restart the contact with everyday life.

The concept of homeless city tours has already become very popular. London has created the "Unseen tours – London's street voices", in the Netherlands, there is "Utrecht Underground", and Brussels has homeless city tours as a touristic offer as well.

The city of Copenhagen realized the project "Poverty walks" with the intention to influence the behavior of and create a better wellbeing for a group of homeless people. Furthermore, the project gave homeless people the opportunity to reintegrate in society. Special training programs for homeless guides were offered by experienced city guides in order to support the homeless by creating their personal city tour. The defined homeless city tours in Copenhagen ended up with various focuses, some do include more personal stories of homeless people, others more historical facts of the city.

Adaption to CULTrips



Source: Susannah L. Sonderlund, June 2010

Referring to CULTrips the homeless city tours represent a social tourism approach that enables tourists to discover a city through an alternative and individual perspective. The city tours base more on social aspects than showing only touristic sites. Because homeless people are guiding visitors by including personal stories and experiences, these tours not only contribute to the social reintegration of the homeless but also to an authentic city walk that enables visitors to discover a city from a different point of view and also refers to

the city's dark side. Due to this social tourism approach and the reciprocal dialogue and exchange between guide and visitors, the homeless city tours represent a potential offer for CULTrips regions that correspond with the requested contact to locals and the tours' authentic elements.

Please refer to the following links to get an impression of what the homeless city tours in different cities are about:

<http://www.gadensstemmer.dk/files/billeder/aboutpovertywalks.pdf>

<http://www.utrechtunderground.com/home>

<http://sockmobevents.org.uk/>

Here you can read nice articles about homeless city tours:

<http://www.culturalrendezvous.com/events/14322085/?eventId=14322085&action=detail>

<http://www.ethicaltraveler.org/2010/06/poormism-on-the-rise-homeless-city-tours/>

The Chinese TV has made a report about the "Unseen tours – London's street voices":

<http://english.cntv.cn/program/culturexpress/20120117/108285.shtml#.TzGekVVDH6c.wordpress>

You find a nice movie about the "Unseen tours – London's street voices" on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7aGmrt7dEO>