



DEBATING MATTERS

sixth-form debating competition

DEBATING MATTERS TOPIC GUIDE

“Tourism benefits the world”

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has traditionally been seen as a way of showing appreciation for different places, peoples and cultures, but mounting fears about the impact of mass tourism have led many to question whether tourists are actually ruining the places they love. A debate about the effects of tourism on tourist destinations has been going on for some time [REF: [Telegraph](#)], leading to the rise of related ideas like ethical tourism [REF: [Tourism Concern](#)] or eco-tourism [REF: [International Ecotourism Society](#)].

Most recently, there has been a renewed focus on the impact that tourism has on major or historic cities. Scottish authors Ian Rankin [REF: [Times](#)] and Val McDermid [REF: [Edinburgh News](#)] have clashed on whether tourism is ‘killing’ Edinburgh. Barcelona is widely considered to have been ‘ruined’ by tourism [REF: [The Guardian](#)], and Venice has considered taking radical steps including banning sitting down in key areas to alleviate the supposed problems of overtourism [REF: [Telegraph](#)]. Moreover, the short-stay rental service Airbnb – used by many tourists – has been accused of driving up rents for locals, turning residential areas into unofficial hotels [REF: [BBC](#)] and even robbing cities of their individuality [REF: [The Verge](#)].

There has, however, been a backlash against the war on tourism, with renewed arguments for the economic and social benefits tourism brings. Critics detect snobbery against mass tourism, moral posturing and hypocrisy, with people bemoaning the effects of tourism while continuing to take full advantage of its many benefits. They ask on what basis people claim a right to tell others how to

enjoy themselves. The overall impact of tourism therefore needs to be reassessed, and the question remains: is the holiday over for mass tourism?

DEBATE IN CONTEXT

This section provides a summary of the key issues in the debate, set in the context of recent discussions and the competing positions that have been adopted.

Does tourism ruin cities?

From the time that the father of mass tourism, Thomas Cook, organised the world's first package tour in 1841, tourism has been more than the preserve of a privileged few [REF: [Wikipedia](#)]. The postwar expansion of air travel started the era of international mass tourism, which today, with the increase in cheap flights, includes many more short breaks alongside annual summer holidays. Ever since this expansion, critics have accused masses of tourists of destroying picturesque towns and cities by littering and drinking but also by replacing businesses aimed at local needs with kitschy tourist-traps and foreign restaurants [REF: [Independent](#)]. But has there always been an elitist undercurrent in such criticisms? [REF: [Stuff Magazine](#)]. The same papers that carry criticisms of mass-tourism [REF: [Guardian](#)] carry articles on the next 'unspoilt' destination for middle-class travellers to visit [REF: [Guardian](#)]. Moreover, the criticism of mass-tourism and chain hotels has directly fed the popularity of Airbnb and the image of 'living like a local', the very thing critics are now decrying. But, when concerns about tourism come from locals, is it not wiser to listen?

Do the economic benefits outweigh the costs?

Tourism is the world's largest industry, a vitally important source of rapid development for many small developing countries [REF: [Financial Times](#)], and a lifeline for those hit by crises [REF: [NYT](#)]. However, many are concerned that money goes to companies abroad rather than local people [REF: [Guardian](#)]. One side points to the benefits from employment and associated opportunities for small family businesses like cafes and handicrafts [REF: [Medium](#)], while the other points to foreign companies creating resorts or excluding locals.

Does tourism damage or improve the environment?

Environmentalists argue flying is the fastest growing cause of climate change, although it is currently responsible for only three per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions [REF: [The Conversation](#)]. There are calls, often successful, for

increased taxes on aviation to discourage flying [REF: [Financial Times](#)]. Budget airlines are a focus of criticism, but they argue that they are more efficient than other carriers. Furthermore, whilst the economic effects of tourism are benefiting historical sites and areas of natural beauty, the dramatic – and often unchecked – rise in the number of tourists goes hand in hand with increased damage, conservation and restoration issues, and the destruction of a way of life for ordinary people.

Whose city is it anyway?

Locals in high tourism areas often feel that their city has been overrun by tourists who don't care about local culture, but are more concerned with getting a selfie in front of a famous landmark [REF: [Guardian](#)] or gaining the credibility on Instagram from being seen in trendy Berlin clubs or Norwegian mountains [REF: [Spiegel](#); [National Geographic](#)]. Moreover, locals feel their rents are increasing and neighbourhoods are changing because of Airbnb [REF: [Curbed](#)]. In response, they have organised protests and campaigned for new laws [REF: [Guardian](#)]. Many cities now have restrictions on Airbnb [REF: [BBC](#)], and Amsterdam is seeking to restrict the sale of marijuana to tourists in response to locals' complaints about stoned and disoriented tourists [REF: [Travel and Leisure](#)]. Yet, many locals feel that restrictions on tourists are restrictions on their own freedom: in Venice, locals organised a guerrilla campaign to destroy barriers and checkpoints designed to keep tourists to designated areas, saying that they 'own the city, not the mayor or tourists' [REF: [Independent](#)].

Should we travel less?

After years of demonisation, travel seems very much to be in vogue again. Being 'well travelled' is social currency in an interconnected world that values cosmopolitanism, yet when such status is as much about avoiding 'touristy' areas or being seen in the 'right' cities like trendy Berlin [REF: [NYMag](#)] as it is about valuing travel as such [REF: [CNN](#)], we are hardly seeing a defence of mass tourism. At any rate, it is relatively rare to see tourism defended on traditional terms such as the value of experiencing new cultures and engaging with great works of world civilisation [REF: [NYT](#)]. Nonetheless, environmental concerns have not gone away, and even if Tourism Concern, the leading ethical tourism charity, was forced to close from a lack of donations [REF: [Guardian](#)], people are increasingly mindful of being a 'good tourist'. Moreover, global tourist numbers are due to increase exponentially as more people in the global south become able to afford to see the world [REF: [Telegraph](#)]. Will these increased numbers be harmful, or should we celebrate the expansion of travel?

ESSENTIAL READING

It is crucial for debaters to have read the articles in this section, which provide essential information and arguments for and against the debate motion. Students will be expected to have additional evidence and examples derived from independent research, but they can expect to be criticised if they lack a basic familiarity with the issues raised in the essential reading.

FOR

Airbnb in Berlin

Airbnb **Airbnb** 5 December 2018

In defense of tourism

Peter Jon Lindberg **Peter Jon Lindberg** 3 September 2018

Anti-tourism gets ugly

Jim Butcher **Spiked** 22 August 2018

In defense of being a tourist

Lilit Marcus **CNN** 19 July 2017

Dear 'Citizens of nowhere' you are not alone

James Shackell **The Journal** 18 January 2017

In defense of the three-week vacation

Jynne Dilling **New York Times** 9 June 2016

AGAINST

When climate change is the reality, our grandchildren will look back in horror at how we travel

Greg Dickinson **The Telegraph** 30 August 2018

Residents in tourism hotspots have had enough. So what's the answer?

Elle Hunt **The Guardian** 9 July 2018

I don't mean to ruin your holiday, but Europe hates tourists – and with good reason

Suzanne Moore **The Guardian** 16 August 2017

Airbnb vs. the city

Megan Barber **Curbed** 10 November 2016

Welcome to airspace

Kyle Chayka **The Verge** 3 August 2016

Six reasons why mass tourism is unsustainable

Anna Pollock **The Guardian** 23 August 2013

IN DEPTH

A timeline of overtourism: key moments in the global battle between locals and travellers

Greg Dickinson **The Telegraph** 5 May 2019

How Berlin is fighting back against growing anti-tourist feeling in the city

Oliver Stallwood **The Guardian** 4 December 2018

Venice locals tear down turnstiles amid fury after they are segregated from tourists

Julia Buckley **Independent** 29 April 2018

Living Next Door to Tourism in Berlin

Various **DW** 22 November 2017

First Venice and Barcelona: now anti-tourism marches spread across Europe

Will Coldwell **The Guardian** 10 August 2017

In Berlin, a Grass-Roots Fight Against Gentrification as Rents Soar

Charly Wilder **New York Times** 18 March 2017

Here's exactly what Airbnb does to rent in popular cities

Jim Edwards **Business Insider** 20 October 2016

How have our travel habits changed over the past 50 years?

Colin Pooley **The Conversation** 21 October 2015

KEY TERMS

Definitions of key concepts that are crucial for understanding the topic. Students should be familiar with these terms and the different ways in which they are used and interpreted and should be prepared to explain their significance.

A history of package holidays

Adam Lusher **Independent** 8 June 2015

BACKGROUNDERS

Useful websites and materials that provide a good starting point for research.

Thomas Cook

Wikipedia 14 November 2018

Ghana after aid

Various authors **Financial Times** 8 October 2018

'Overtourism' Is driving europeans crazy

Jessica Loudis **The Nation** 12 September 2018

Your choice of holiday destination is a political act

Brendan Canavan **The Independent** 6 August 2018

The backlash against Airbnb

Charlemagne **The Economist** 19 July 2018

The holiday destinations that are saving the planet

Oliver Smith **The Telegraph** 5 June 2018

Traveller vs tourist: The worst thing about being a travel snob

Ben Groundwater **Stuff Magazine** 22 May 2018

Tourism creates thorny ethical dilemmas: isn't that the point?

Akshat Rathi **Quartz** 12 April 2018

I did nothing all over the world

Kate Manser **Medium** 5 March 2018

In defence of the 'tourist trail'

Jessica Lee **Lonely Planet** 18 February 2018

Does your holiday pass the human rights test?

Rebecca Seales **BBC** 7 February 2018

The 'new' Gap Year: Is it worth it, and what should I do during my year before university?

Flora Carr **The Telegraph** 16 August 2017

Ethical Tourism and travelling off the beaten path

Tobias Roberts **HuffPost** 6 July 2017

In Defense Of Chinese Tour Groups

Panpan Wang **Huffington Post** 2 May 2017

It's time to wake up to the devastating impact flying has on the environment

Roger Tyers **The Conversation** 17 January 2017

No, tourism is not an act of 'white privilege'

Jim Butcher **Spiked** 29 September 2016

IN THE NEWS

Relevant recent news stories from a variety of sources, which ensure students have an up to date awareness of the state of the debate.

Majority of residents in favour of tourists

Various **Visit Reykjavik** 5 November 2018

Almost half of UK holidaymakers want tourism tax – survey

Various **ITV** 4 November 2018

Leading ethical tourism charity forced to close

Antonia Wilson **The Guardian** 28 September 2018

Will you soon have to pay a tourist tax to visit the Scottish Highlands?

Greg Dickinson **The Telegraph** 27 September 2018

How is overtourism impacting travel to popular destinations?

Johnny Jet **Forbes** 20 August 2018

Selfies and sweat stains: bad holidays and bored tourists – in pictures

Laurence Stephens **The Guardian** 31 July 2018

Airbnb Drives Up Rent Costs in Manhattan and Brooklyn, Report Says

Luis Ferré-Sadurní **New York Times** 3 May 2018

The Netherlands isn't as weed-friendly as it used to be

Natasha Bach **Fortune** 17 April 2018

The unstoppable rise of the Chinese traveller – where are they going and what does it mean for overt

Oliver Smith **The Telegraph** 11 April 2018

Cancún: from tourist beach paradise to hotbed of Mexico's drug violence

David Agren **The Guardian** 14 March 2018

12 destinations travellers might want to avoid in 2018

Joe Minihane **CNN** 3 February 2018

Where to go on holiday in 2018 – the hotlist

Various **The Guardian** 6 January 2018

Tourists have turned Oxford into 'hell', locals claim

Natalie Paris **The Telegraph** 8 August 2017

'Tourism kills neighbourhoods': how do we save cities from the city break?

Elle Hunt **The Guardian** 4 August 2017

Stats: millennials 5x more well-traveled than their grandparents

Various **Travel Agent Central** 27 July 2017

Why Amsterdam's coffeeshops are closing

Various **The Economist** 10 January 2017

Airbnb faces worldwide opposition. It plans a movement to rise up in its defence

Shane Hickey and Franki Cookney **The Guardian** 29 October 2016

High Line neighbours hate "High Line tourists"

Garth Johnston **Gothamist** 24 May 2016

Barcelona declares war on stag and hen party binge drinkers with ban on Happy Hour

Telegraph 15 October 2009

