

A Different Guided Tour

Guided tours are not a new phenomenon. In every major tourist city, you can spot groups of sightseers following a guide, who carries a colourful umbrella or wears an easily visible hat to ensure that no one becomes lost. They see the highlights of the city, all happily taking the same photos and eating at the same restaurants. The only other customers are, like themselves, visitors from overseas, as locals know they can eat better food much more cheaply elsewhere.

Of course, such tours are popular because most people want to see the same iconic sights and take photographs of themselves there. However, a new type of tour company is springing up, since some people want to discover hidden secrets rather than famous landmarks. These new tours are often run by locals who talk about why they consider the city to be their home.

Here are two examples of the kinds of tours on offer. Most people who visit Iceland want to see the geysers, black sand beaches and waterfalls. As an alternative, one company is offering tours of the capital Reykjavik which focus on the economic crash in 2008 that led to all three of the country's main banks going bankrupt. It is a fascinating tour, not only for those with an interest in finance, but for anyone who wants to find out about the country and its people. The tour is free for children, but probably not very interesting for them.

In Prague, where the main square and Charles Bridge can become almost impassable in the summer owing to the large numbers of visitors, you can book a tour of some of the city's less visited spots, all of which are led by people who have, at one time or another, been homeless. As they guide their small groups around the city, they tell their own stories as well as point out interesting places unknown to most visitors.

While such tours are popular, they do not attract sufficient numbers of tourists to transform the areas they visit into overcrowded tourist sights. Instead, the visitors blend into the neighbourhoods they visit and perhaps receive a better and more realistic understanding of the city they are visiting.

QUESTIONS

I. READING COMPREHENSION.

Choose TRUE or FALSE.

1. For the majority of tourists, a traditional guided tour goes to the places they want to see.
2. The "crash tour" won't be of interest to people uninterested in finance.
3. If you take the tour in Prague, you can be sure that you will be led by someone who is currently homeless.
4. The writer is worried about the effect the new type of tours may have on the neighbourhoods they visit.

II. LEXICON

Find words or phrases in the text that mean the same as these given.

1. see
2. major points of interest
3. available to buy or use
4. because of

III. USE OF ENGLISH

Rewrite the following sentences starting with the words given:

1. We missed our tour because we didn't leave the hotel on time.
If
2. All the tourists are amazed at these sights.
All the tourists think
3. Although it was snowing heavily, we decided to drive on the motorway.
In spite
4. The guide told us some interesting facts about this neighbourhood.
We
5. I am sorry I didn't join you on the tour.
I wish
6. You won't get a table if you don't book in advance.
Unless