

RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

Visitor attractions are diverse from built, natural, heritage, cultural and contemporary experiences. They provide access to specific areas of interest, education and entertainment and are an integral part of a tourist's time in Ireland.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT VISITOR ATTRACTION?

- Fáilte Ireland with the help of 16 visitor attractions across the country undertook a pilot study in the summer of 2016 to find out what appeals to tourists when it comes to visitor experiences.
- 2,400 visitors (84% were international) were interviewed to test a range of the experience features from amenities and staff, interior layouts, exhibits, information tools to the storytelling and the tour.
- This research identified key elements that influence visitor satisfaction levels - coupled with insights from around the world, gives a greater understanding as to what makes a great visitor attraction.



GUIDED TOURS

Tours make all the difference



STORY CONTENT

A good story goes a long way



DELIVERY

Interpretation – there are lots of ways to tell a story



NAVIGATION

Coherent layouts



VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Remember the person in the crowd



TRANSACTIONS

Keep Transactions Simple



TOURS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

While the delivery of a story can come in many forms, the personal element of tours and tour guides play a vital role in delivering excellent visitor experiences.



WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Tour Delivery

Passionate, informed guides, who provide an entertaining tour and bring emotion to the story are highly valued

EXAMPLE

Kilmainham Goal, Dublin

"Very well organised tour, the story was told with such emotion, couldn't have been told any better"

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Interested and enthusiastic tour guides are key to keeping the story fresh for visitors

Allow guides freedom to build on the story from their own research (as long as it's evidenced)

Tour being fun as well as informative

Humour and distinctive 'nuggets' contained within the tour delivery are often especially memorable

Museum Hack, USA

Selected US museums provide unconventional museum tours with lively 'insider' stories, juicy gossip, activities in the galleries and fun photos with the art

Visitors are taking time out of their day to visit and learn, so keep the narrative light and fun

Allow the guides to bring out their own personality

A GOOD STORY GOES A LONG WAY

Stories bring the content to life. Great stories **reveal** what may not be apparent, **relate** to the visitor on a personal level and **provoke** an emotional response.



WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Re-tellable stories

Stories about people, rituals and events are particularly well received and stick in the mind of the visitor

EXAMPLE

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

See the "Door of Reconciliation" and hear how it gave rise to the Irish expression "To chance your arm"

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

What fun fact will resonate with your visitor and get them talking long after they've left, marketing your attraction for you?

Stories need to build upon and be different from what is available on websites (or other sources)

Royal Yacht Britannia, Edinburgh

The highlights of the tour are presented online to catch your attention but you need to go to find out why it is in TripAdvisor's UK Top Ten for 3 years running

Pre-visit information should be just enough to pique visitors' interest

Some will have done their homework, others won't. Stories need to build on what's available and add a new dimension to the story for everyone

Uniqueness of story to Ireland

Even if the story is universal, what is the Irish twist on it? What strand of the story can only be told in Ireland?

Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Limerick

"...The replica of the plane was amazing, you can sit at a bar and watch a hologram of the first Irish coffee being made then you can go and enjoy a real one in the cafe"

What makes the story special to Ireland – is there something about the people or place that can be a point of differentiation?

INTERPRETATION – THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO TELL A STORY

Well-planned, entertaining and authentic interpretation, based on an understanding of the visitor, their motivations and interests, can deliver a great visitor experience.



WHAT IT'S ABOUT

EXAMPLE

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Unique delivery of story

Not all stories need to be told orally, interactive elements and exhibits can be just as memorable, especially for those who choose to self-guide

DDR Museum, Berlin

"This was an eye opening history lesson for me. The museum is very hands on and not stuffy and dull. It is mostly interactive"

What are the best ways of authentically telling your story?

What is the best mix of storytelling tools for your attraction?

Audio guides and information/ audio guides for non-English speakers

Audio guides can provide a consistent high quality of storytelling. Catering for your non-English speakers also has a big impact on their experience

Alcatraz, San Francisco

The compelling Cellhouse Audio Tour "Doing Time" through the cellhouse featuring the voices of former guards and inmates is available in ten languages

Audio guides can provide consistency of storytelling when done right

Getting relevant narration by key protagonists in the story is powerful and emotive

Use of media

Short informative films and novel use of media can bring an additional layer to the story

Smithwicks Experience, Kilkenny

"The 18th Century Living Room (with talking portraits and photos) was a particular effective way of telling the story of Smithwick's"

Media has impact if it adds to the story, however keep it short, sharp and relevant

Concise interpretation of story

All audiences and language capabilities should be considered

National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

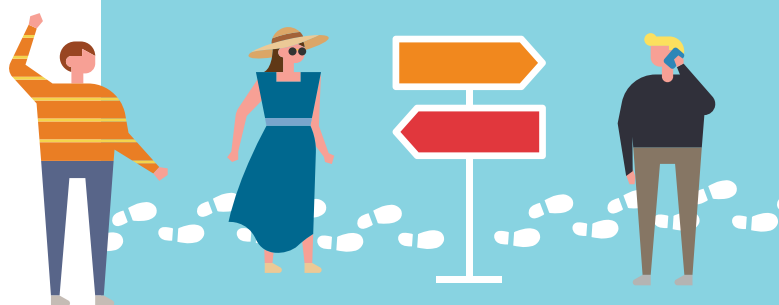
"I learned more here about Ireland's history than most of the places I visited. Great and easy to understand information"

Exhibition panels and text need to be short, succinct and easy to read

Find ways to provide for those who want a whistle stop tour and those that want and expect more detail – can panels be designed in a way to cater for both?

COHERENT LAYOUTS

Good stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. Make it easy for visitors to find the start and follow the flow.



WHAT IT'S ABOUT

EXAMPLE

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Easy to navigate layout of exhibition or story

Well signed and laid out, easy to follow interior and/or exterior layouts are integral to understanding the story presented

Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

"Bloody excellent, we would recommend anyone visiting Wellington see this museum, the layout of the exhibits is marvellous"

Understanding that visitors don't always read signs, is there a physical way to help visitors navigate attractions?

What are the usual questions to staff? Can interventions be put in place to ease navigation?

REMEMBER THE PERSON IN THE CROWD

Put yourself in your visitors' shoes to get insight into how to continually improve their experience.

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WHAT IT'S ABOUT

EXAMPLE

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Fit for Purpose

Many types of visitors come to your attraction – have you considered all visitor types as part of your experience development?

Guinness Storehouse, Dublin
Survey visitors and commit to improving anything that impacts satisfaction

Can you identify the different types of visitors who cross your door and understand their motivations?

Do you seek feedback on your attractions – both formally and informally?

Tour Management

Visitors are looking for a unique experience when they come to your attraction. Small intimate groups and a relaxed pace add to satisfaction levels

Those Dam Boat Guys, Amsterdam
This fun, alternative canal tour is very popular and is pre-booked weeks in advance as it caters for small groups

Are there ways to manage the flow of tours so one group isn't bumping into another?

Is there enough time allowed for questions?

Interactive exhibits

Creative people management techniques are required to avoid long queues

Heineken Experience, Amsterdam
When queues are bad Heineken entertain their visitors with live music or treats to keep their spirits up

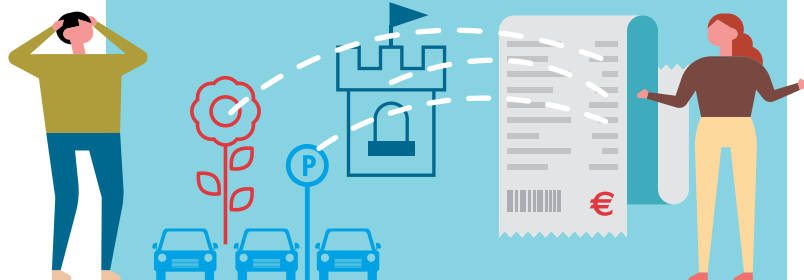
Is the experience worth the wait?

Are there ways to entertain the visitor while waiting?

KEEP TRANSACTIONS SIMPLE

Easy transactions and value for money stand out as central to visitor satisfaction.

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WHAT IT'S ABOUT

EXAMPLE

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

One Price Point

Visitors don't like what they deem to be hidden costs, multiple pay points aggravate them (car parking, then entry, then audio guides etc).

Warwick Castle
"We got inside the Castle, it's beautiful but you literally have to pay for everything other than admiring the view"

Are you offering good value for money?

Is one inclusive price available?

FIND OUT MORE



- For more detail on this research go to www.failteireland.ie and click on the **Research** page
 - For more information and support on how to plan for better storytelling and interpretation no matter what part of the country you're in go to www.failteireland.ie
- Choose **Ireland's Ancient East** – and click **Toolkits for Tourism Businesses** for storytelling interpretation toolkits