

tourism defined

Much has been written about heritage tourism, and cultural tourism over the last decade. Some maintain that the focus has to be on “cultural”, others insist on “heritage.” In Vermont, however, we decided long ago that our efforts were best described by the broader, more encompassing term of “Cultural Heritage Tourism.” We see the landscape as having shaped our settlement patterns, not only in terms of how we used it, but also in where we placed our houses, public buildings, and commerce centers. The land has fashioned our culture, providing the raw materials for our crafts, the inspiration for our art, and the grist for our stories. It has directed our activities, fueled our industry, and captured our hearts. It is central to our nature. In this context, Cultural Heritage Tourism is, simply: visiting a place to experience those singular qualities that define its character, name its essence, and provide for its collective memory. In Vermont, cultural heritage is found in its people and is reflected in its objects, structures, museums, sites and landscapes. It is expressed in its crafts, visual and performing arts, history, literature and oral traditions. It is the embodiment of our behavior, and as such is organic and evolving.

demographics of the cultural heritage traveler

The cultural heritage traveler is someone who wants to experience an authentic and distinct sense of place, and is happy to pay for the privilege of doing so. According to a 1997 survey conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), Cultural Heritage Travelers:

- Spend more money (\$615 per trip) than the average U.S. traveler (\$425).
- Stay longer (4.7 nights) than the average U.S. traveler (3.3 nights).
- Are more likely to stay at a hotel, motel or bed and breakfast (56%) than the average U.S. traveler (42%).

Compared to U.S. travelers as a whole, cultural and heritage travelers also:

- Are more likely to fly than drive their own cars.
- Are more likely to shop while traveling.
- Are more likely to travel in April and July.
- Are slightly more educated and affluent.

- Are more likely to travel outside their region of residence.
- Participate in more activities, particularly visits to national and state parks.

Another TIA study, this one conducted using different methodologies in 1998 found:

Forty-six percent of the 199.8 million U.S. adult travelers (92.4 million) included a cultural, arts, heritage, or historic activity while on a one-way trip of 50 miles or more during 1997. Visiting a historic site such as a historic community or building was the most popular cultural activity among travelers (31%), followed by visiting a museum (24%), visiting an art gallery (15%) and seeing live theater (14%).

Of the 92.4 million travelers that included a cultural activity while on a trip, 29 percent (26.7 million adults) added extra time to their journey because of this cultural activity or event. Of those 26.7 million travelers who added time:

- 61% added part of one day.
- 30% added one night.
- 5% added two extra nights.
- 4% added three or more extra nights.

Travelers who included cultural events on their trips differ from other U.S. travelers in a number of ways. They are more likely to:

- Have higher household incomes.
- Have completed college.
- Have managerial or professional occupations.
- Be married.

the vermont numbers

According to a study done by the Vermont Tourism Data Center (<http://nature.snr.uvm.edu.vtdc>) in 2000, the profile of the Vermont cultural heritage traveler parallels the national trend in most areas. That is, this type of traveler spends more money, stays longer, has a higher income, etc. In Vermont, some of the numbers exceed the national statistics. For example:

- 40.5% of all visitors to Vermont reported visiting a historic site or attending a cultural event.
- 29% visit more than once a year.
- 87% of cultural heritage visitors bought Vermont made product.
- The average length of stay was 7.67 nights, which is nearly twice as long as other visitors.

Unlike the national profile, however, cultural heritage visitors to Vermont:

- Come mostly from the New England or the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Drive their own cars to the area, or participate in bus tours.
- Travel during the summer and fall.

Perhaps one of the most interesting things to come out of the *2000 National Survey of the Vermont Visitor* is that the typical person who comes to Vermont for any reason generally fits the national profile of a cultural heritage traveler, giving us a very broad market share.

the economics of cultural heritage tourism

Cultural heritage tourism is not necessarily about attracting new tourists. It is about attracting more “high-value visitors,” people who will stay longer and spend more. Encouraging visitors to stay an extra day is the driving philosophy behind many tourism initiatives, including our own. Studies show that cultural heritage activities do indeed promote overnight stays, and that there is a correlation between the type of activity and the length of that extension. Cultural heritage resource visitation in this state breaks down as follows:

- 43.7% of visitors to Vermont visited an average of 2 historic sites.
- 37.4% a historic museum.
- 28.6 historic homes.
- 24.6 craft shows.
- 14.7 art shows.
- 28.6 studios and galleries.
- 18.1 non historical museums.
- 9.9% performing arts.

There are regional figures to support the contribution the cultural heritage resources make to the State’s economy as well. The New England Council (www.newenglandcouncil.com), the oldest regional Chamber of Commerce in the United States, released the findings to phase one of its Creative Economy Initiative (www.creativeconomy.org) in June of 2000. The study was created in an effort to define and enhance the role of the arts and culture industry in New England’s economic competitiveness. It found that employment in Vermont’s Creative Cluster is growing faster than the average of all industries in Vermont; and that Vermont has slightly higher concentration (1.6% of its workforce) of creative workers than the rest of the United States. Not only is the Creative

Cluster a significant component of the Vermont economy, producing 13,546 jobs (4.2% of all jobs), and generating a total payroll of \$107.8 million, but employment in that cluster is growing faster than the average of all industries in the Green Mountain State.

The Creative Economic Initiative research further indicated that the 479,000 travelers who visit Vermont annually because of the creative cluster spend \$710 million dollars, and engender 11,500 jobs serving those visitors from that spending.

benefits of cultural heritage tourism

The benefits of cultural heritage tourism can be far-reaching. For communities, it can strengthen the local economy; promote resource protection; increase visitor expenditures; generate employment; preserve the unique character of a community; increase community pride, and awareness of community resources; increase tax receipts; and stimulate economic growth.

It can assist the cultural heritage resources themselves by augmenting revenues in appropriate and sustainable ways; fortifying cultural heritage resources through a stronger base of cooperation; fostering recognition of the economic contribution of the cultural heritage resources on a regional and community level; and strengthening the preservation, protection, and presentation of the resources.

Finally, on the state level, cultural heritage tourism encourages the protection and continued use of cultural heritage resources, which is important to the quality of life and economic well-being of the state. It strengthens cultural heritage resources, and the tourism industry; it is an integral, complementary element of the recreation and leisure environment of the state; and it stimulates revenues in appropriate and sustainable ways.



Bixby Library, Vergennes, courtesy of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce, photo by Mark Favreau.

Cultural heritage tourism is no magic bullet. It takes time, commitment, a desire to share assets, and most of all the ability to work with non-traditional partners. When done right, the community and the resources benefit. By its very nature, cultural heritage tourism protects historic, cultural, and natural resources in villages, towns and cities. It also provides an opportunity to educate residents and visitors about local and regional history and traditions. And, it can help build closer and stronger communities through civic leadership. The economic benefits not already mentioned include diversification in the service industry, manufacturing, and agriculture; encouragement of local ownership of small businesses; higher property values; increased retail sales; and substantial tax revenues. When a community engages in cultural heritage tourism, and chooses the assets it wants to share, the process has the potential to enhance its quality of life.

resources

The Creative Economy Initiative: The Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness. New England Council Report, June 2000.

Travel Industry Association of America. *Profile of Travelers Who Participate in Historic and Cultural Activities.* Results from the Travelscope® Survey, August 1997.

Vermont Tourism Data Center, University of Vermont, Burlington. 802-656-1330. www.uvm.edu/~snrvtdc.

Villani, John. *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America.* Santa Fe, New Mexico: John Muir Publishing, 1996.