



Audiences London

Wish you were here... Cultural Tourism Symposium

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Case Study: London Borough of Camden - bringing tourism and culture together

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The London Borough of Camden is home to a range of world class institutions: the British Library, the Royal Opera House, the London Transport Museum and the British Museum are just some of the high profile institutions to be found within its borders. Alongside these culture and heritage powerhouses (the British Museum alone attracted some 5 million plus visitors in 2008, making it Britain's most visited attraction that year) sits a broad cultural offer encompassing historic Bloomsbury and Covent Garden, village-y Hampstead, trendy Kentish Town and vibrant, buzzing Camden Town. The London Borough of Camden is one of only a few London boroughs to work on culture and tourism together, drawing on the diversity and depth of its local areas to build a comprehensive and compelling offer for visitors. They achieve this through co-ordinating a range of activities and strategic initiatives to really join up the cultural offer with the visitor economy in their Borough.

Investment and economic impact

Central to LB Camden's approach is substantial and sustained investment in the cultural industries and visitor economy. To secure this investment, the Arts and Tourism team commissioned external consultants to produce economic impact studies demonstrating the value of Camden's creative and cultural industries (CCIs) and visitor economy to the Borough as a whole: a £1.2 billion visitor spend per annum (a large proportion of which is on accommodation, but which also includes substantial retail, restaurant and entertainment spends) and some 60,000 jobs within the Camden CCIs. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that employers increasingly prefer to base their businesses in Camden for reasons of staff retention: employees report that the area's 'buzz' makes it an appealing place to work (the Arts and Tourism team plans to evidence these reports through future case studies). While the economic impact reports themselves necessitated quite significant investment from the Arts and Tourism department, they have enabled the team to secure substantial subsequent funding from, for example, the Council's Recession Recovery Fund, and to embed CCIs and the visitor economy at the heart of the Borough's strategic plan. CCIs and the visitor economy are thus central to the 'Place Shaping Plans' (area action plans intended to promote the general well being of a community and its citizens) being developed and implemented in Camden Town, Kings Cross and Euston.

In addition to raising the profile of culture at the strategic level, the Arts and Tourism team works on a number of practical projects, campaigns and initiatives to make their offer compelling and accessible to a wide range of visitors, including:

TfL Legible London – Working in partnership with Transport for London and LB Westminster to develop clear and consistent signposting throughout Covent Garden and Bloomsbury, making it easier for visitors to explore the area on foot. *Target market: All visitors*

LoveCamden.org – The LoveCamden website (and accompanying brochure) aims to bring together the cultural offer in Camden in an engaging, attractive and accessible online format. Content is organised according to region (e.g. Kilburn, Kentish Town) and theme (e.g. eat, stay, shop). The website showcases hidden gems alongside more well known destinations, and helps users navigate the offer through features such as ‘10 things you must do in...’ and the ‘I love’ section (streaming video clips of locals’ top tips). There are plans to develop the site to incorporate user-generated content and additional rich and social media, creating an interactive space for visitors and residents to offer recommendations and feedback. *Target market: All visitors, with particular relevance to domestic visitors and Londoners*

Museum Mile – “A walk along Museum Mile provides a fascinating insight into London, past and present. From Euston Road to the River Thames, discover 13 of the city’s most extraordinary museums and galleries and their equally diverse collections”. The Museum Mile initiative aims to ‘package’ the broad museum offering in Camden’s Bloomsbury and Marchmont area, making visitors aware of the range of destinations (some large, some small) on offer in this fairly compact area and encouraging visitors to visit multiple museums in one trip. *Target market: All visitors, with particular relevance to domestic visitors and Londoners*

Walks and trails – LB Camden is currently exploring ways to introduce a network of walks and trails, joining up key and lesser-known sites and telling the story of the borough with insights into life in the local area. *Target market: Domestic and international visitors*

Concierge tours – arranging briefing sessions and tours of local attractions/venues etc for hotel concierge staff to keep them well informed of the local offer and to encourage them to pass their recommendations on to visitors. LB Camden plans to organise these tours more regularly, ensuring they are properly incentivised (e.g. free theatre tickets or afternoon tea to thank participants for their time). *Target market: Hotel guests – either international or domestic tourists, or business people with money to spend in the local area.*

Summer programme – Summer activities contribute to a ‘carnival atmosphere’ and help Camden to achieve a high level of arts engagement amongst residents as well as visitors. Maintaining support and engagement amongst the borough population is key to creating and sustaining a successful cultural offer for tourists.

Top tips for other organisations:

- Provide clear evidence for the impact of culture and tourism to make the case for continued investment. This may require initial investment from you (e.g. in an economic impact study or case studies).
- Promote your full offer: showcase the hidden gems alongside the big hitters
- Make it easy for visitors to navigate your offer
- Tap in to the skills and opportunities of people already active in the sector – e.g. get concierges to promote your offer (but remember, this means taking the time to equip them with the right information, and rewarding them for their time investment)
- Don’t forget to build relationships with your residents, too – they help make the borough what it is for tourists

Further information

<http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/arts/>

www.lovecamden.org

<http://www.museum-mile.org.uk/>

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/microsites/legible-london/>

Want more help reaching cultural tourists?

If cultural tourists are a priority target audience for your organisation, Audiences London can offer a surgery session to support your organisation to define its objectives, refine your messages for target groups and use your resources effectively.

For more information about Audiences London's resources or services please contact:

Email: info@audienceslondon.org

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Or visit the services section on the website www.audienceslondon.org