

Visions in Leisure and Business

Volume 24 | Number 1

Article 1

3-31-2022

Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Long, Lucy and Groves, David L. (2022) "Introduction," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 24: No. 1, Article 1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25035/visions.24.01.01>

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VISIONS IN LEISURE AND BUSINESS

ISSN 2690-6708

Vol. 24 No. 1 and 2 Spring and Summer

Editor: Dr. David L. Groves, Bowling Green State University

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DEDICATION

Dr. Lucy Long

This issue of Visions is dedicated to Dr. Lucy Long. Her contribution to the Culinary Tourism is innovative and groundbreaking. She is one of the first to recognize the importance of the humanistic aspects of this type of tourism and its direct impact upon a community. Her passion to this topic is beyond the normal dedication of an academician to further and improve the knowledge base. It is evident throughout the many manuscripts in this issue, and their reference to Dr. Long's work, that she has had a significant impact upon this discipline. Her approach that focuses upon the unique culture of a region, its food and its impacts, has been a revolutionary approach. It is very difficult to even begin to realize the importance of her influence upon past, as well as future endeavors.

THEME: CULINARY TOURISM

Dr. Lucy M. Long

Guest Editor

Beginning in the winter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the travel and tourism industry worldwide. As borders closed down, restaurants and hotels closed, and potential tourists stayed home, businesses and individuals involved in providing services lost employment, wages, and social, personal, and economic opportunities. One organization estimates that over \$4 trillion could be lost by the global economy due to COVID (UNCTAD 2021).

While not all tourism providers were able to respond creatively to the new circumstances, a large number were able to develop innovative approaches, tapping into virtual tools, meal deliveries, classes, and other formats. They discovered that infrastructure and overhead were not necessary to offer on-line workshops and lectures, blogs, vlogs, and even hosting of small groups of tourists. Many would-be tourists also responded creatively, discovering, as John Urry pointed out several decades earlier, that physical corporeality was not the only way to travel. Tourism could occur virtually through the Internet or in one's imagination through books, films, and other such media (2001).

At the same time, many tourism scholars and analysts saw the pandemic as a time of reflection on the current state of tourism. Photos of famous sites previously populated by tourists but now empty and pristine began circulating as reminders of the destructive nature of over-tourism. An introduction to a special issue of an academic journal stated that the authors: "focus on visions of how the pandemic events of 2020 are contributing to a possibly substantial, meaningful and positive transformation of the planet in general, and tourism specifically. This is not a return to a 'normal' that existed before—but is instead a vision of how the world is changing, evolving, and transforming into something different from what it was before the 2020 global pandemic experience" (Lew, et al., 2020).

Other scenes, however, showed the economic devastation of destinations that had been dependent on tourism. The lack of employment in tourism services left individual lives and communities in ruins. These scenes remind us that tourism is a complex system of industries as well as a complicated human activity based on multiple motivations. Changing the system to make it more equitable and sustainable may be possible, but changing the nature of the humans participating in these activities is a different matter. Some scholars feel less than hopeful about that possibility. "There is a consensus that the COVID crisis should be a turning point, to "build back better", and that a return to pre-pandemic overtourism phenomena is undesirable. Yet, there is very limited evidence that the crisis has changed or will change tourism beyond the micro-scale." (Gössling and Schweiggart, 2022).

Food-centric tourism has suffered the same devastations that other forms of tourism have. Food, however, may offer some opportunities not found in those other niches. As a biological necessity, people need to eat, and once their minimal amounts for supplying energy and nutrition are met, they oftentimes use food as a medium for exploring, socializing, learning, and escaping. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded people that food can still offer a way to “travel,” even while they were confined to their homes. It also has illuminated flaws in the industrial food system that have depended so much on inequitable and inhumane treatment of the individuals laboring in the various links of global supply chains. If anything, the pandemic has demonstrated how we are all connected and can impact one another, regardless of whether we are aware of those impacts. Culinary tourism is one area in which we can actually see those connections and perhaps find ways forward to a better future for us all.

This special issue of *Visions* addresses the current states and future potentials of tourism revolving around food, recognizing the varied names used for this type of tourism: culinary, gastronomic, and food tourism. It explores innovations within the tourism industry as well as creative responses by tourists and individual tourism providers. It also asks how culinary tourism can contribute to creating a more sustainable world.

The contributors represent a variety of disciplinary and professional backgrounds. They all give perspectives grounded in specific places, showing that the responses to this global crisis are shaped by specific contexts. They also engage with culinary tourism as a cultural activity, helping to fulfill tourism scholar, Sally Everett’s, call for scholars to undertake a more culturally-informed interrogation of food tourism. By “embracing different disciplinary theoretical and empirical ingredients,” [such scholarship] provides a new dimension with which to re-visit dominant discourses and examine social relationships and interactions” (2016: 537).

The issue contains reflection essays as well as research articles, starting with the latter. It begins with an insightful article by John Mulcahey who has worked extensively in the tourism industry in Ireland but also earned a PhD combining food studies and tourism development. From this unique and knowledgeable perspective, he calls for gastronomic tourism to be used for social change, not just economic development. For this to happen, academics, practitioners, and policy makers need to work together. The following article by Paula Johnson explores the potential role of museums in working towards positive change. Such institutions have frequently incorporated food-related materials into their exhibits and programs, but they have tended to see their role as educational centers rather than tourist destinations. As director of the American Food History Project at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History (NMAH) in Washington, D.C, Dr. Johnson was seeing a surge of visitors prior to the pandemic coming specifically for the food content--culinary tourism. The closing of the museums to the public during the pandemic has given staff the opportunity to reflect upon their programs so that they can tap into this interest and channel it in positive ways.

Lucy Long’s article offers an overview of the variety of forms of virtual culinary tourism that have either been highlighted or created during the pandemic. These forms reflect the humanities-based definition she articulated in 1998 that approaches tourism as a state of mind as well as a physical movement. From this perspective, tourism is a negotiation of the exotic and the familiar and that negotiation is on an individual basis. These virtual experiences offer the potential for

tourists to become more familiar with specific food cultures, so that they will feel more security and confidence in trying them in person. Virtual forms also help tourists become more knowledgeable about the complexities surrounding those cultures and food in general. At the other end of the spectrum from virtual to corporeal tourism are cruise ships. Shayan Lallani discusses the various ways the pandemic has affected the industry, observing that prior to the pandemic, on-board dining had been a significant part of the experience. The various safety measures put in place not only limited the social aspects of that dining; they also limit the opportunities for that dining to be culinary tourism. The article by Ziene Mottiar and Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire completes the research section with its analysis of the impacts of the pandemic on teaching culinary tourism at the university level. They find that that the experiences of COVID-19 have actually made their classrooms more accessible and international, opening up the possibilities of tourism education to reach more individuals and to have a greater influence.

The four reflection essays offer more personal accounts of experiences during the pandemic. Elizabeth Williams and Brent Rosen discuss how a past history of resilience at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in New Orleans enabled it to adapt to the new circumstances posed by COVID-19 restrictions and concerns. As a founder of one of the first museums devoted to food in the U.S., Williams speaks of her own balancing of vision and pragmatism. In the end, her skill with such balancing carried the institution to even more creative and inclusive programming. Michelle Potter then offers a reminiscence of her own culinary explorations in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Her experiences there left her feeling immersed in history and a strong sense of hospitality and community. Such memories then inspire plans for culinary tourism in the future.

Nicole Tarulevicz discusses how Tasmania created a “moat” around itself during the pandemic. While this kept out the international culinary tourists, it gave rise to new opportunities for domestic tourism. High-end restaurants whose prices for dining in would normally have been prohibitive now offered take out meals, allowing more customers to enjoy that food. The tourism industry also began campaigns offering cooking classes and farm-stays, introducing many Tasmanians to activities that had been previously perceived as being for international tourists. Similarly, Tasmanian products could not be exported for parts of the pandemic, with the result being that they were sold domestically for much less than the usual cost. The author found it possible to try a number of such items. While many nations found the closing of borders disruptive, culinary tourism in Tasmania by Tasmanians actually flourished. Cecilia Leong-Salobir describes an opposite experience in the Australian state of Western Australia where she makes her home. While the stringent rules for border closings and shut downs of businesses helped keep the region relatively COVID-free, these measures also echo a history related to colonialism and ideologies that “protected” it in the past from unwanted outsiders. At the same time, the author appreciated the freedom of movement allowed to residents and the sense of security from the fears of the pandemic.

Numerous scholars, tourism professionals, and tourists themselves have made observations about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on culinary tourism. (See Further Reading below.) Some of those impacts are quantifiable in amounts of money earned or lost, the volume of visitors to a destination, the number of restaurants that have closed or have adapted in innovative ways. The intangible impacts, though more difficult to measure, may actually be more significant. The ways

in which we think about tourism as well as food have been challenged by the pandemic, expanding the possibilities for both to be mobilized for positive changes that will ultimately bring more benefits to more people. In the meantime, as the cartoon below points out, even with the social distancing required during the pandemic, we're all in this together.

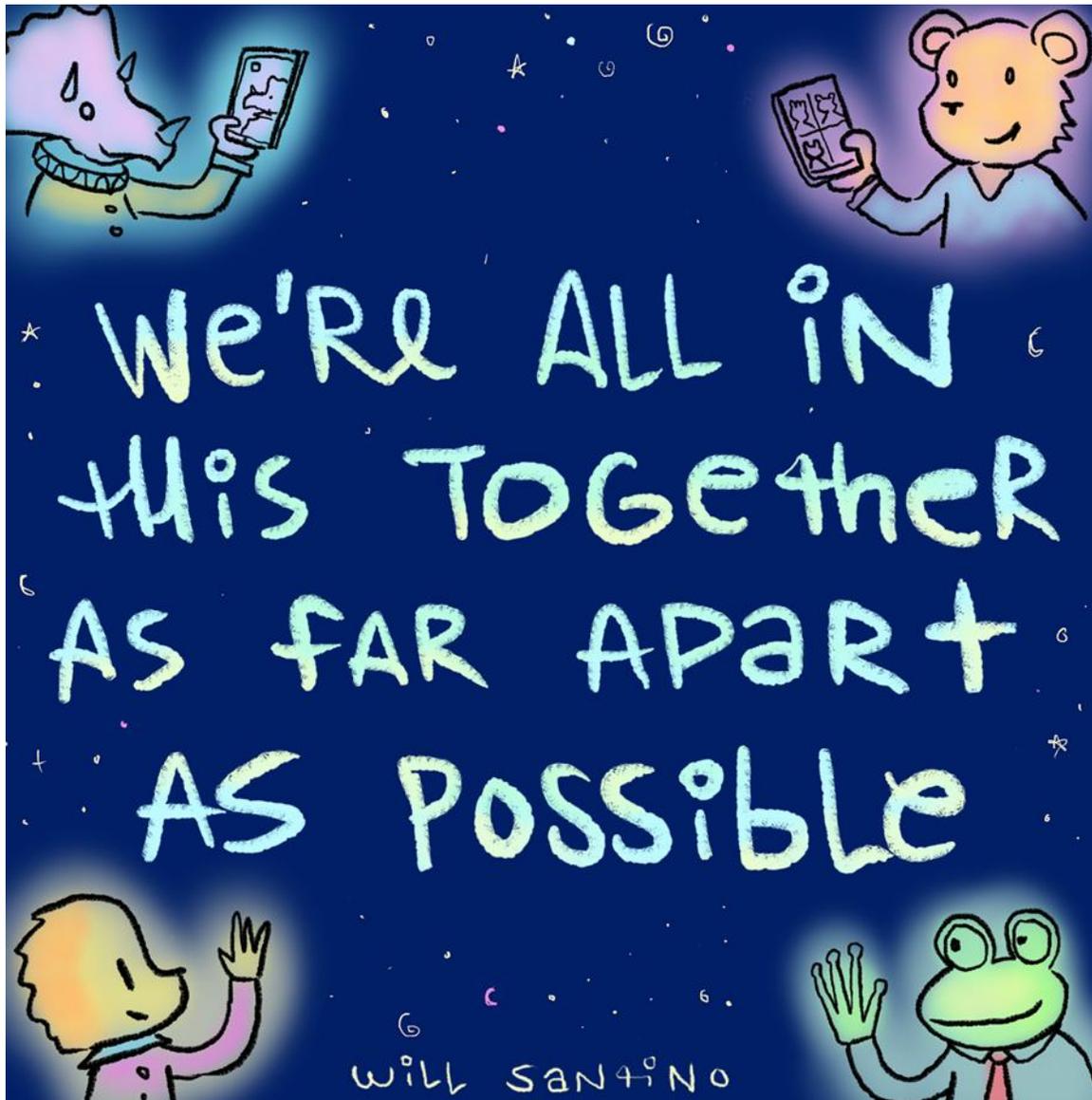


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