Literary tour

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The literary tour is a pre-established route through which tourists move, reaching stages and destinations of an itinerary related to literature.

The literary tour is, therefore, the itinerary through which literary tourism takes place, a type of tourism that can be defined as slow and sustainable in contrast to mass tourism, which is part of cultural and heritage tourism. Literary tourism offers trips to places and cities closely linked to literature. This type of niche tourism and its path tend to occur very often when the authors or their works become so popular that people hit the road: attracted by the places associated with the author or by those featured in their writings, tourists go to visit them along an itinerary that qualifies for its literary character.

The literary tour is, therefore, a type of tourist and cultural travel which in recent years, has strongly developed in relation to specific texts of literature or to places linked to an author (*e.g.*, birthplace, houses, tomb) or to the characteristics of a book (*e.g.*, setting, landscapes, characters). For these reasons, it is a journey through the places valued by a writer or a literary work or a tour of the places where events focused on literature are periodically held (*e.g.*, literary festivals), up to including a visit to the dedicated literary parks to the authors. It is a form of tourism mainly motivated by the desire to visit real or fictitious landscapes and places related to literature. Furthermore, it is a travel itinerary that ends up enhancing and preserving the presence or memory of literary authors or aspects of their works: in fact, the tour requires a further process: to allow tourists to follow in the footsteps of the poets' local institutions are committed to the promotion, conservation and enhancement of the territory that hosts literary memories, also through marketing, advertising and training activities for tour operators.

The literary tour is, therefore, a way of doing cultural tourism that deals with places and events taken from literary texts or the life of their authors: this leads to including along the way the visit of particular sites associated with a novel or a novelist, such as a writer's house or burial ground; to follow the paths traced by an imaginary character; to visit places mentioned in poetic texts; as well as to visit bookshops, museums, museum houses, bodies, foundations, archives dedicated to specific writers, works, literature or literary genres.

Some scholars consider literary tourism and its itineraries a modern non-religious pilgrimage. If to undertake such a pilgrimage, there is only a need for interest in books, in recent years, journalists, travellers, and scholars have written and are writing literary guides, maps and literary tours to help tourists choose or plan their journey.

Most of literary tourism focuses on famous works, institutionalised places and paths or those present in the collective memory, physically realising a real journey, but the literary tour can also be of a virtual nature. Works written to specifically promote tourism are called "tourist fiction". This genre can include travel guides that take the reader and tourist inside the story, offering a virtual literary tour and showing how to visit the actual or fictitious places of the stories. With recent technological and digital advances that have renewed the publishing offer, fiction books on tourism can, in fact, guide tourists or readers to discover the places related to the story read; for example, with direct links to tourist websites, images, captions, insights, maps: the links within the story allow travellers to instantly know the places of the literary text without carrying out further searches on the web. The virtual tour can be done on newer electronic reading devices such as Kindles, iPads, smartphones, tablets, and desktop and laptop computers. There are also several apps that you can freely consult: *e.g.,* "cityteller app, cities and books", a social platform for literary travel with an interactive geo-emotional map that describes cities around the world through the places shared by users in books; "Find a grave app", a worldwide burial search tool; "appGPSmyCity Walks in 1K+ Cities" which uses GPS functions to transform your mobile device into a personal tourist guide.

Returning to the actual literary tour, experienced by the tourist walking in the urban or natural space, its most frequent destinations are the birth, residence, vacation or death houses and cemeteries or burials of writers, museum houses, commemorative plaques, monuments, schools and institutions visited by writers, literary parks, writers' travel and walk routes, writers' trails, real-life settings, reconstructions or sites mentioned in the works of writers, places that writers have intentionally or incorrectly suggested as real places or fictitious in their works, the frequented literary cafes or the places where literary groups and circles have gathered, literary museums, archives, bodies, foundations dedicated to the study and memory of literature.

The paths that wind through these places of interest are precisely the literary tours which, depending on the length, can be divided into two main categories: the literary walks and the literary paths, two proposed itineraries that have the task of bringing lovers of the literary heritage of the area and to accompany them for a short visit or a longer stay.

The form of walking that everyone experiences more easily is that of the walk, which usually interrupts daily activities. It is shorter than a long journey and can be done any time of the year, revealing itself as a practical way to relax without going too far from home, for example, during a weekend. Within a cultural journey, the walk can be intended to discover the corners of a city and details of places related to literature. It doesn't have the physical effort of a long hike; however, it must also be considered that the route is different from the country or mountain path: the sidewalks are crowded with people, and along the way, you don't come across

animals in freedom, it is possible to leave a trace of one's passage on the ground, the rhythm of the walk varies according to the crowd that fills the sidewalk and the obstacles that obstruct the passage, one is confronted with noise instead of silence, with anonymity in the crowds instead of solitude, there are no signs engraved on wood or painted on tree trunks and stones, but the names of the streets to indicate turns and directions. The sensoriality that becomes more acute on a walk in the open air in the mountains or the woods is almost anaesthetised in the city: the hearing has to deal with the noise of the traffic, the sense of smell perceives more the poor quality of air, culinary smells in general and some scents given by plants and flowers, touch is simply forbidden, the most used and valued sense during the urban walk is then the sight. In fact, the walk offers a route where it is possible to see many things in a short time, therefore, in the tourism sector, it is perfect for connecting various places, establishing itself as the literary tour par excellence, increasingly present among the tourist offers of agencies and administrations.

Instead, a path is defined as a long itinerary that can be travelled on foot, by bicycle, on horseback or with non-motorized vehicles (*e.g.*, Il Cammino di Dante between Toscana and Romagna and others). The path is always designed by adopting a precise focus, often linked to cultural themes of historical, religious, and literary inspiration, providing that a good part of the path takes place in contact with nature. For these reasons, the paths have an intrinsic potential to become a valuable tool for the development and enhancement of the innermost areas, of small towns away from mass tourism and of tangible cultural heritage (*e.g.*, small museums, historical centres, rural areas, sites minor archaeological sites, places of worship) or intangible (*e.g.*, landscape, traditions, dialects). The paths can become the flywheel of a new cultural and tourist use model that overcomes the unsustainability problems of mass tourism, also promoting employment and the local economy.

Literary paths and "slow tourism" itineraries, in general, attract a varied public, made up of walkers looking for an alternative experience, in contact with nature, but also of people who are more intrigued by the cultural, historical and literary compared to the average tourist. The paths respond to the needs expressed by tourists who are increasingly inclined to freely organise their vacation, establish more direct contact with the territory, discover local products and appreciate the experiential and cultural side of the time spent on the path. Precisely the nature of the "slow tourist", respectful of the values he encounters along the way and attentive to the soul of the places, is making the institutions aware of encouraging this kind of sustainable and cultural tourism, capable of activating dynamics of protection, conservation, promotion, valorisation of the territory which allow to obtain an undoubted positive impact on the economy.

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