AOHT Geography for Tourism

Lesson 2

What Is Travel Geography?

Student Resources

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Student Resource 2.1

Notes: Travel Geography

Student Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read Student Resource 2.2, Reading: What Is Travel Geography? Answer the questions below.

1. What is travel geography?
2. What is tourism?
3. What are the differences between physical and human geography?
4. What are the six elements of travel geography?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

1. What is geotourism?

6. Why does travel geography matter to hospitality and tourism professionals?

Student Resource 2.2

Reading: What Is Travel Geography?

Graciela and Valeria Velasquez are twins who will graduate from college in June. They will be the first in their family to graduate from college, and their parents and grandparents have saved up money to send them on a celebratory trip. The twins sat down to decide where they wanted to go.

“I want to go somewhere warm,” Graciela said. Their college was in Boston, and it was snowing outside. “I miss the sunshine. I also want to go someplace with a great beach,” Graciela said. “I want to get in a few games of beach volleyball.”

“You want to find a hot guy,” Valeria said. “We can go anywhere in the world, and all you’re thinking about is the beach? Mom and Dad live in Miami. We can go to the beach any time.”

“So where do you want to go?” Graciela asked.

“I’d like to go someplace really different,” her sister responded. “Maybe someplace in Europe or even Africa or Asia. I want to go somewhere where they speak a different language and have a really different culture. Try unusual foods, learn about their history, listen to the local music—that kind of thing.”

“Boring!” Graciela rolled her eyes. “It would be so much better to go someplace that’s really beautiful and we can just relax and enjoy the scenery. Maybe someplace like Hawaii or the Caribbean, where there are lots of flowers and stuff. I love flowers.”

Valeria sighed. Clearly she and her sister would have a lot of talking to do before they could pick a place to go on the trip.

What Is Travel Geography?

Believe it or not, the argument Valeria and Graciela were having was really an argument about geography. Geography is fundamental to travel and tourism. Geography can be defined as “a science that deals with the description, distribution, and interaction of the diverse physical, biological, and cultural features of the earth’s surface.” Many people think about geography according to the five themes of geography: location, place, human/environment interaction, regions, and movement.

Movement is a theme that is especially important to the study of travel and tourism. We don’t mean movement like commuting to work or school, and we don’t mean movement like migrating, which is moving to a new place to live. Instead, travel geography studies the movement or flow of people between places and the factors that motivate people to make these journeys. The definition of tourism takes this idea of movement into account. The [World Tourism Organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Tourism_Organization) defines tourism as when people travel to and stay in "places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

There are other useful ways to think about geography as it relates to travel/tourism and destinations.

Physical Geography and Human Geography

Geography can be divided into two major sections: physical geography and human geography.

* **Physical geography** is the study of the physical features of the earth’s surface, such as climate, water, and landforms, and the processes that affect them. These natural features add to the beauty of destinations while also working together to create ecosystems and plant/animal habitats that can attract tourists. Graciela is interested in physical geography. She is focused on the weather, the beach, the scenery, and the flowers.
* **Human geography** is the study of the characteristics and features of the earth and how they relate to or are the result of human activities. Within the category of human geography is *cultural geography*, which is the study of the customs, food, clothing, music, architecture, traditions, and languages of a region. These aspects of culture have a huge impact on destinations. They make each place unique through their combination of buildings, artifacts such as sculpture and art, and gathering places that are interesting to tourists. Valeria is interested in human geography. She wants to go to a place that has a different language, culture, and customs.

Travel geography considers both of these categories of geography in relation to tourist destinations. Hospitality professionals study the human and physical geography of different types of destinations—international, national, state, and local tourist spots—to identify how and why travelers might be drawn to these places.

Although we have described human and physical geography separately, in reality geography is the study of the interaction between people and the physical environment. Think about the human-environment relationship as a two-way street. The natural environment affects human activity. For example, if you live in Milwaukee and it’s February, you wear different clothes to school than if you live in Miami. In Milwaukee you need a coat; in Miami, you don’t. In turn, humans affect the natural environment, for better or worse. Climate change is an example of this two-way relationship. Humans are being affected by global changes in temperature and sea level rise. But humans brought these changes about themselves, by altering the environment and polluting it.

The Six Components of Travel Geography

In analyzing how and why tourists are attracted to certain destinations, professionals in hospitality and tourism also consider the six components of travel geography. In this course, we will also consider them.

These are ways of further categorizing the two main sections of physical and human geography:

* Physical location and characteristics (Where is the destination located? What physical geography—mountains, lakes, valleys, deserts, and so on—is around it?)
* Weather and climate (What type of weather does the destination get? Are there times of year when it is better to visit because of the weather? How does the weather affect tourism activities?)
* History (What important events happened at this destination? What important people came from here? How has the destination changed over time?)
* Culture (What types of people have lived here? What art, music, drama, dance, and religion are common in the destination? How has the culture affected the landscape and life there?)
* Reasons people travel to a destination (What will attract people to this destination? Are there things that will keep people away from this destination? For example, people may not wish to visit a place that just suffered a natural disaster, or people may choose not to visit a foreign country if the exchange rate makes their money worth less when they visit.)
* How the destination meets their travel needs (What does the destination offer? What tourist services are available?)

Remember Graciela and Valeria? They finally decided to go to Thailand. Thailand has beautiful beaches and flowers (physical location and characteristics) and warm weather (weather and climate), which would please Graciela. It has a fascinating history and a culture very different from that of the United States, which would please Valeria. Thailand meets all their needs, so that’s where the girls decided to go—and they had a great time.

Why Does Travel Geography Matter in the Hospitality Industry?

Knowing travel geography helps professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry determine which physical and human/cultural elements to highlight about a destination. If they are developing a new tourist attraction or destination, they need to do a lot of research about the geography of the place they are considering to make sure it meets every requirement of their company. Knowing about the geography is key to making sure the destination appeals to visitors; the geography is the whole reason travelers are visiting in the first place!

Geography has always motivated people to travel, but it is even more important to tourists now. In fact there is such a strong interest that a new form of tourism has evolved, known as geotourism. Geotourism identifies, markets, enhances, and protects the special geographical character of places. The character of a place comes from a mix of its culture, history, heritage, natural environment, and local population. Geotourists want to experience these aspects of a place rather than spending their time in a resort that separates them from the region they are visiting. Therefore, knowing the human and physical geography of destinations is essential for hospitality professionals. Because its goal is to truly experience a particular place’s unique qualities, geotourism stresses conserving the cultural and natural heritage of destinations for the benefit of present and future generations. No meaningful plan for protecting the special character of a destination can happen without first gaining an intimate geographical knowledge of the human and physical elements of that place.

Student Resource 2.3

Assignment: Geography in the Workplace

Student Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Choose one of the descriptions below and write an explanation of how that job uses or is influenced by travel geography. Make sure to include the six elements of travel geography you learned about in this lesson. Before you begin, read through all of the instructions on this resource, and read the assessment criteria at the end of the resource to make sure you understand how your work will be assessed.

Choose a Description

* Sachiko Nakamura is a travel agent. Why does Sachiko need to know travel geography? How is it a part of her job?
* Deonte Johnson is a travel writer for the *New York Times.* Why does Deonte need to know travel geography? How is it a part of his job?
* Caridad De La Torre works for an international hotel chain. Her job is to identify new locations where her company may want to build a hotel. Why does Caridad need to know travel geography? How is it a part of her job?
* Jeremy Astrauckus is a caterer and event planner who specializes in working with film crews. Jeremy’s company provides food and hosts parties for the cast and crew while they’re on location. Why does Jeremy need to know travel geography? How is it part of his job?
* Nicole Locatelli is an adventure travel guide. She lives in Kenya, where she takes people on safaris and other explorations through the beauties of Africa. Why does Nicole need to know travel geography? How is it part of her job?

Write a Profile

Write a short profile about one of the people described above, explaining why travel geography is a part of that person’s job. Be sure to include the six elements of travel geography you learned about in this lesson: physical location and characteristics, weather and climate, history, culture, reasons people travel to a destination, and how the destination meets their travel needs (including tourist services). An example profile is provided below.

**Example Description**: Tom Papadopoulos is an executive with Mediterranean Exploration Cruises, which offers 7- and 14-day cruises to Europe, Africa, and Asia. Why does Tom need to know travel geography? How is it a part of his job?

**Example Profile**:

Tom Papadopoulos is an executive with Mediterranean Exploration Cruises, which offers 7- and 14-day cruises to Europe, Africa, and Asia. Travel geography is an important part of Tom’s job. Tom needs to understand about the physical location and characteristics of the ports that his company’s ships go to. His company has some small cruise ships and some very large ones. Tom needs to know if a port is big enough and deep enough to handle his company’s large ships, or whether he needs to send a smaller ship there. He needs to understand what the weather and climate are like in those ports, because he doesn’t want his cruises to go to ports that have a lot of storms or bad weather. He can schedule the cruises during the best weather, so that his customers get lots of sunshine and beautiful days, and so that his ship crews don’t have to worry as much about storms or ice. He also needs to understand the travel distance and time between ports to be able to route ships more efficiently through a region to save fuel and other travel expenses.

To choose good places for his cruises to visit, Tom needs to know something about each port’s history and culture. If the port has a lot of historical or cultural significance, more people might want to visit it. Also, if the port city has a history of violence or other problems, Tom might suggest that his cruise line go somewhere else. Tom can plan cruises that emphasize the history or culture. For example, he might do an Ancient History cruise that visits places in Greece, Turkey, Egypt, or Italy. Or he might do a Renaissance cruise that stops in several places in Italy and then sails on to ports in Spain and France.

Tom needs to understand the reasons that people travel and how each port city might meet their travel needs. This understanding will help him pick good cities for his company’s ships to visit—cities that appeal to lots of people and provide good tourist services for the people on the cruise. Some port cities are more focused on shipping goods and supplies than taking care of passengers. If Tom books his ships there, he may get complaints from customers who don’t like being surrounded by fishing boats, livestock, or container ships that make a lot of noise. Tom needs to know which ports offer good tours and excursions that will fit with the ship’s schedule, so that his customers can enjoy their time ashore without getting too tired or missing the boat when it sails. If Tom doesn’t know these things, his company might end up with less successful cruises.

Preparing to Write

First, think about the job of the person you chose to write about. What are this person’s responsibilities? Which responsibilities are connected in some way to one of the six elements of travel geography? Make notes about this person’s job here:

Next, think specifically about the connection between the person’s job and each of the six elements of travel geography. Jot down your notes here:

Physical Location and Characteristics:

Weather and Climate:

History:

Culture:

Reasons People Travel to a Destination:

How a Destination Meets Travel Needs:

Now you have the information you need to write your profile. Begin by describing the job you have chosen. Then write a couple of sentences about how each of the six elements of travel geography affects this person’s job. Aim to write two or three paragraphs. You can use the area below to take more notes, but write your profile on a separate piece of paper.

Make sure your assignment meets or exceeds the following assessment criteria:

* The profile offers a complete, accurate description of a specific hospitality career.
* The profile shows evidence of understanding the importance of each of the six elements of travel geography.
* The profile clearly describes how geography affects the career of the person in the profile.
* The profile is neat and uses proper spelling and grammar.