

Tour de force

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ADVENT approaches. Reading the Gospel for Saturday of the 1st week of Advent, we come across one of those words in translation that seems slightly anomalous, because of its modern connotations. “Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages...” Jesus a tourist? Any translation will produce a few like that, as the translators struggle to capture the sense of a tricky word.

There’s another on the 4th Sunday in Lent, where we read: “The police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees...” Police? I have an image of the local constabulary in my head, and it won’t go away!

“Tourism” may seem an odd choice of word in the Christmas month, until we think of the many who visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Christmas tourism is a term that covers a multitude of destinations, from Christmas markets to a visit to Santa Claus in Lapland.

“Tour” is a borrowing from French and appears in English in the seventeenth century. The diarist John Evelyn comments on its novelty in his *The State of France* (1652), when he talks about travellers “making the Tour’, as they call it”. Tourist comes in a few years later, and tourism at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

I’ve lost track of the number of tourisms that exist these days. Some are familiar; others less so. Most of us have come across teletourism, where we visit locations we’ve seen on screen. Then



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there’s ecotourism, bringing together conservation, natural habitats and sustainable travel. 2017 was the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, and several terms now relate to it, such as geotourism, conscious tourism, slow tourism, pro-poor tourism, heritage tourism, and responsible tourism. With business tourism, you engage in some recreational activities while on a business trip. With benefit tourism, especially as applied to Britain, you travel to places where you can live off social security.

But what about architourism (to see architecture), pescatourism (days out on a fishing boat), agritourism (to see

agricultural locations and activities), avitourism (bird-watching), gastrotourism (for food), and vinitourism or oenotourism (for wine: N. O’Phile will know about that). You can visit a place to give birth (birth tourism), get treatment (medical or health tourism), or legally end your life (suicide tourism). Some motivations are disturbing: disaster tourism, war tourism, dark tourism, and thanatourism, for places associated with suffering or tragedy – from Thanatos, the Greek god of death. I’ll leave sex tourism to your imagination.

Happier connotations are seen in voluntourism (volunteers abroad), philantourism (visiting places that need tourist support), accessible tourism (for those with age or physical limitations), and VFR (visiting friends and relatives) tourism. You can stay at home and be a cybertourist, or browse collections as a phototourist. We see the future in space tourism (familiar to Guy Consolmagno).

And for *The Tablet* we mustn’t forget religious, spiritual, sacred, or faith tourism – visits to see religious monuments, artefacts, and locations, or travel for spiritual purposes, as on a pilgrimage or retreat. Finally, there’s astrotourism, where we go to good places to see stars, eclipses, or rocket launches. Bethlehem had at least three well-known astrotourists. Which is where we came in.

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