

## BORDER TOURISM SUBTYPE OF DARK TOURISM

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**Abstract.** *Border tourism is the form of tourism focused on the Iron Curtain as a resource and implicitly, on the former Berlin Wall, differing from bordered tourism in which gambling and shopping activities are practiced. The phrase border tourism also refers to Iron Curtain Tourism, an inclusion made to expand the range of sites that, for one reason or another, are centered on a border and can be included in this type of tourism. Border tourism can be considered a sub-type of dark tourism because it is practiced in sites where people have died, who tried to cross this barrier being a form of sinister tourism, genocide, genealogical tourism and cultural tourism historical educational and recreational. Border tourism in the form of day trips has been a considerable phenomenon, although the number of visitors cannot be determined precisely, today they are carried out in combination with other forms of tourism to diversify activities.*

**Key words:** *dark tourism, border tourism, types*

### INTRODUCTION

Border tourism is focused on the Iron Curtain as a resource and implicitly, according to most experts in the field on the former Berlin Wall and differs from borderd/borderland tourism in which the following activities are practiced:

- a. gambling, due to the regulations of the country of origin;
- b. shopping, because other products are found or prices are lower than in the country of origin, which makes small border traffic profitable, or simply because visa formalities are simpler [2].

On March 5, 1946, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965), former British Prime Minister at the time, gave a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, MO, USA, stating that an "iron curtain" had been lowered throughout Europe, pointing to the Soviet Union's efforts to isolate itself and its satellite states from open contact with the West and areas not controlled by the Soviets [5]. The "curtain-symbol" Iron Curtain [8] was the imaginary border that divided Europe and especially Germany [12] into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 to the end of the Cold War in 1991. The Iron Curtain not only divided the Germans into East Germans and West Germans and into Catholic and Protestant Germans [11], but also had the effect of purging/reconfiguring the ethnicity of the border inhabitants, for example at the Czech-German border [4,6,7] - an area that would become an attraction for ethnic tourism enthusiasts.

On the eastern side of the Iron Curtain were the countries connected or influenced by the Soviet Union, but on each side of the Curtain, the states developed their own international economic and military alliances:

- a. the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (C.A.E.R.) and of the Warsaw Pact, with the U.R.S.S. as the main state;
- b. the member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.) with the United States as the preeminent power.

Physically, the Iron Curtain took the form of border defense systems between the countries of Europe in the middle of the continent (Figure 1), the most notable border was marked by the Berlin Wall and the checkpoint nicknamed "Checkpoint Charlie" at the border between two Germans, which served as a symbol of the Iron Curtain as a whole.



**Figure 1. Iron Curtain, marked by the black line**

The proximity of the German inter-zonal border was marked by road signs that warned on the fact that the area below 1 km away from the border was coming. From the physical representation of the Iron Curtain can still be seen, today, remains in Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.



**a**  
Barbed wire fence at the Czech-German border



**b**  
Concrete dragon teeth, electric fence and guard tower at the Czech-German border



**c**  
Barbed wire fence at the Slovak-German border (Devinska Nová Ves, Bratislava)

**Figure 2. Physical remains of the Iron Curtain in the Czech Republic and today's Slovakia**

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

Border tourism, or Iron Curtain, was initially centered on the border, being considered a subtype of dark tourism. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, border tourism uses in addition to existing resources other resources, becoming at the same time a subtype of historical, cultural and recreational-sports tourism by including sites in tourist routes that stretch over longer distances. For these reasons, in this scientific approach, consulting the literature and research results, we made proposals to diversify the activities of border tourism and combine them with new cultural-educational-recreational activities, to increase the stay, by implementing new forms of tourism so that border tourism becomes at the same time historical, educational, recreational and cycling cultural tourism.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The phrase border tourism also refers to Iron Curtain Tourism an inclusion made to expand the range of sites that, for one reason or another, are centered on a border and can be included in this type of tourism, with the condition to fit into the category of those closely related to the Iron Curtain period. Border tourism can be considered a sub-type of dark tourism because:

1. is practiced in sites where people have died, who have tried to cross this barrier;
2. is a form of sinister tourism [2];
3. it is a form of genocidal tourism, atrocities have taken place in this area [10]
4. is a form of genealogical tourism, the search for roots, the place where events took place with some family members, due to the separation of borders and the attempt to move to a certain part [15]
5. a form of historical and cultural educational tourism [9].

As a military installation, the border marked by the Iron Curtain could be deadly. As a political metaphor, it was a major rhetorical acquisition throughout the Cold War and on a less metaphorical level, the German Iron Curtain turned into a tourist resource. While border tourism reached its peak in the years after the construction of the Berlin Wall (part of the Iron Curtain) in 1961, the consumption of the inter-German border as a tourist product began long before, lasted until its demolition in 1989, and continues as a commemorative tourism to this day.

Border tourism in the form of day trips has been a considerable phenomenon, although the number of visitors cannot be determined precisely because no ticket has been sold for this purpose. However, border tourists were counted, although in different estimates: in 1969, 1,650,000 visitors, of which 23,000 foreigners; in 1978, 1,840,000 visitors [2].

The chronology of the Berlin Wall is as follows: 13 August 1961 - the lifting of the Berlin Wall, 24 August 1961 - the first victim to attempt to cross the Berlin Wall on 10 September 1989 - the complete opening of the Iron Curtain along the Austrian-Hungarian border, November 4, 1989 - 1,000,000 East Germans gather in Berlin at Alexanderplatz, November 9, 1989 - The Berlin Wall is opened and then destroyed [1]. The Berlin Wall was the central monument and symbol of the Cold War (1945-1989) in Europe - a conflict rooted in World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) - and the emblem of the division of the world into two political spheres. [13].

Today, sections of the Berlin Wall can be seen accompanied by panels which presents its history, the plaques that mark the old route of the wall and the galleries on the east and west side and can be visited by the Berlin Wall Museum.



Wall sections in Potsdamer Platz



Plate near Potsdamer Platz



Gallery on the east side



Gallery on the west side

**Figure 3. Relics of the Berlin Wall**

Perhaps even more emotional are the cases in which the Iron Curtain absurdly, brutally and directly affected the inhabitants of the border area, who became, overnight, exhibits of pain and injustice for the tourists who came to visit them. Thus, at the Philippsthal on the Werra, where there was a printing house, the family transported the cars to the west side of the building, in 1951, to prevent confiscation, and therefore they were no longer allowed to enter the east side of the house. The idea of a house with a strong contrast between the western half (beautifully renovated) and the eastern half (dilapidated) - an image that corresponded well with West German propaganda about the material deficit under socialism [12] - was quickly embraced by tour organizers who included it regularly in border trips until the autumn of 1989. In Berlin, the inhabitants of Bernauer Street woke up in 1961 that their apartment was in East Germany and the sidewalk in front of the building was in West Germany [3]. At Böckwitz-Zicherie (Lower Saxony), a wall separated two villages with close historical ties; at Mödlareuth, a similar wall, erected in 1966, divided the village and divided its 50 inhabitants. All these places are, today, attractions of border tourism.

Another border tourist attraction is the places where the East Germans tried or even managed to cross the border: the resort Hohe Geiss in the Harz Mountains or the town of Helmstedt. Other attractions are:

- a. control towers;
- b. guard towers along the curtain;
- c. The monument of the German Division in Bodesruh (1961-64);
- d. Thüringerwarte in Lauenstein (1963);
- e. Bayernturm in Zimmerau (1966).

All these resources were exploited by the West Germans before the fall of the Berlin Wall and by all Germans after that for tourist purposes because they offer particularly beautiful views, some towers are even 26 m high and offer visibility up to 15 km away. The memory of the Iron Curtain is also kept alive in Budapest, Hungary, where a Memorial and the House of the Museum have been arranged. In 2005, the European

Parliament recognized the EuroVelo 13 Project as a model project for sustainable tourism, so that in 2009 it decided to create a network of cycling routes. Thus, the route of the former Iron Curtain, 9,950 km long, which connects three European seas and offers the chance to visit 14 U.N.E.S.C.O classified sites, will give for the cyclists the opportunity to relive this important part of European history. Through this project, border tourism becomes at the same time:

- a. historical cultural tourism;
- b. educational tourism;
- c. recreational tourism;
- d. sports tourism;
- e. cycling tourism.

Today, the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, although still marked by differences in landscape, environment, economic and social and still attracting many consumers of different forms of tourism, no longer function as such, they are just "relic borders" [14], resources for various forms of historical, educational and recreational cultural tourism such as Hadrian's Wall or the Great Wall of China.

### CONCLUSIONS

The practice of border tourism also refers to Iron Curtain Tourism and includes sites that, for one reason or another, are centered on a border and can be included in this type of tourism, provided they fall in the category of those closely related to the Iron Curtain period. Border tourism is a sub-type of dark tourism being practiced in sites where people have died, who tried to cross this barrier. It is considered today a form of genocidal tourism, genealogical search for relatives, friends who perished in those places but also a form of educational historical cultural tourism. All these resources were exploited by West Germans before the fall of the Berlin Wall and all the Germans then for tourism purposes through model projects, on long routes to offer the chance to visit more motor sites giving tourists the opportunity to relive this important part of European history and border tourism to become at the same time, historical cultural tourism, educational tourism, tourism recreational, sports tourism.

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