

Showcase Salzburg

Results of a survey on young visitors' understanding of cultural heritage

On 15 March 2013, the CreativeCH team in Salzburg conducted a second survey on the perceptions of young people towards cultural heritage. While in the previous survey the focus was on the local population, the new survey particularly addressed visitors to Salzburg. 33 American students of the Salzburg Programme of the University of Portland participated in the survey. All except two students were either 18 or 19 years old, and 24 out of the 33 students were female. In terms of educational background, the majority of participants either studied languages or another social sciences and humanities subject; about a third had a natural sciences background.

The main objective of the survey was to learn more about visitor's initial expectations of cultural heritage in Salzburg and how these views have changed after having lived here for nearly a year. Another rationale behind the survey was to compare the perceptions of (young) visitors to Salzburg with those of (young) locals.

The findings of the survey revealed that most American students knew very little of Salzburg before they came here. What they knew they had often learned from watching "The Sound of Music", which is a very popular film in the United States. Students also associated Salzburg with Mozart and (classical) music. As a consequence, some expected to be travelling to (in the words of one student) a kind of "European Disneyland".

This somewhat stereotypical image of Salzburg, however, often changed after living in Salzburg for some time. Students seemed surprised when they learnt that Salzburg was quite modern and not the "dusty" or Disneyesque city they initially expected. At the same time, some students considered Salzburg also as somewhat boring and sleepy. In general, students really enjoyed Salzburg, and they particularly appreciated the city's rich cultural heritage.

Asked about their favourite spots and places, students mostly suggested sites and attractions that Salzburg is famous for. These include, for instance, the Salzburg Fortress, the Mirabell Gardens, the Salzburg Dome, or Mozart's Birthplace. Other, more unconventional recommendations include taking a drink at the Augustinerbräu, hiking up the Untersberg or the city's hills (e.g. Mönchsberg or Kapuzinerberg) or taking a walk along the river Salzach. The students also appreciated local and regional customs and traditions, such as the Christmas markets or the local food and cuisine.

When learning about cultural heritage students seem to appreciate old and new media alike. In terms of new media and technologies, they have mostly utilised standard applications, such as information on websites or guided tour apps on smartphones. These are not only useful while visiting the city but also for preparing a tour in advance. The possibility to interact and exchange information with other users was also mentioned several times, as well as using social media, such as facebook. In contrast, a small minority of students noted that they would not like to learn about a city's cultural through new media and technologies. Overall, students remarked that they really enjoyed exploring the city's cultural heritage.

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