

Starting up

- Do you think cities should impose a tourist tax on visitors?
- How could such taxes be imposed and collected?

Reading

Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, could soon become the first city in the UK to impose a tourist tax. To find out more, read the article and then do the exercises below.

Reading comprehension

Based on the information in the article, decide whether the following statements are true (T), false (F), or there is not enough information given (N). Refer to the relevant section of the article to support your choice.

- 1 The tourist tax in Edinburgh will be introduced on 1 June 2019.
- 2 The proposal is that visitors should pay £2 per week.
- 3 Venice plans to charge an entry fee to day trippers to the city.
- 4 Many cities impose a tax on hotel stays.
- 5 In general, government ministers of tourism are not in favour of tourist taxes.
- 6 Some cities regard tourists as a nuisance because they overcrowd facilities and make a mess.
- 7 Asian and Pacific countries are now the most popular destinations worldwide for tourists.
- 8 The UK is in the top 10 international tourist destinations.
- 9 The most popular countries for international tourists would like to have fewer tourists.
- 10 Theatres and taxi drivers are not greatly affected by the number of tourists who visit a city.

Vocabulary 1

Edinburgh is planning to impose a *tourist tax* on visitors. Find two other words in the article with a similar meaning to *tax*

Tourist taxes are a gamble with a vital sector

Edinburgh councillors last week voted to be the first city in the UK to *impose* a tourist tax. The vote, which requires *legislation* by the Scottish parliament before it takes effect, called for a £2 per night charge on all paid accommodation for the first week of a visitor's stay.

Edinburgh's move follows Venice's plans to impose an entry charge on day-trippers, which prompted Gian Marco Centinaio, the Italian tourism minister, to ask: "Do we want to become a tourist-repelling country?"

Tourist taxes are not new. Many cities around the world have levies on hotel rooms. These vary from flat-rate charges, as Edinburgh proposes, to percentages of the accommodation bill to bands of charges based on the class of hotel.

Proponents of tourist charges usually advance two arguments for them: either that the place is *overrun* by visitors, as in Venice's case, or that tourists use facilities and should share the *burden* of paying for them.

It is true that tourists use parks, litter bins, free or subsidised museums and take up police time — all services provided by local residents' taxes. There is, in the debate about what taxes to impose on tourists, a sense that the visitors are a *nuisance*. They block pavements and train doors, hang around *aimlessly*, often do not know where they are going and generally make a mess. Venice says it needs tourist tax money to pick up all the rubbish the visitors leave behind.

International tourism is growing fast. In 2017, there were 1.3bn international tourist arrivals, an increase of 7 per cent on the year before.

More go to Europe than anywhere else — 51 per cent in 2017. Asia and Pacific destinations were the next most popular with 24 per cent. Sixteen per cent went to the Americas. Just 4 per cent went to the Middle East and 5 per cent to Africa.

Among individual countries, France, Spain and the US were the top three international destinations. The UK was seventh. This was behind China, Italy and Mexico, but is a creditable performance for a country with *unreliable* weather and little in the way of beach or ski resorts.

People in the most-visited countries may think that this is good enough and tourists should now begin to make for the African and Middle Eastern destinations that really need them. But while tourism, managed well, can be a *spur* to development, the idea that richer countries can do without tourists, or far fewer of them, is horribly *complacent*.

Tourists don't just support hotel and restaurant jobs. They create employment among food, drink and cutlery suppliers and makers of bed and table linen. Theatres and taxi drivers notice immediately when the tourists stop coming.



Vocabulary 2

Look at the words and phrases in *italics* in the article. If you are unfamiliar with them, try to work out their meaning from the context. Then match them with these definitions.

- 1 not easy to predict or be sure of
- 2 supporters
- 3 something that encourages someone to do something
- 4 someone or something that annoys you or causes problems for you
- 5 to introduce a new law, rule or tax
- 6 too confident and relaxed because you think everything is OK
- 7 when there are very large numbers of people in a place so that it is unpleasant
- 8 a law or set of laws
- 9 a serious or heavy responsibility that you have to deal with
- 10 doing something without any particular purpose or plan

Grammar 1: articles – a/an, the, no article

Match the explanations about the use of articles (a-c) with either: *the*, *a/an* or *no article*. Then match the explanations with the words and phrases (1-10) from the first paragraph of the article.

- a used with singular countable nouns
- b used when we know which thing we are talking about either because it is unique or it has been referred to before
- c generally used with plural nouns or uncountable nouns

- 1 councillors
- 2 the first city
- 3 a tourist tax
- 4 the vote
- 5 legislation
- 6 the Scottish Parliament
- 7 a £2 per night charge
- 8 accommodation
- 9 the first week
- 10 a visitor stay

Grammar 2: articles – a/an, the, no article

In the extract below from a later part of the same article, a number of deliberate mistakes in the use of *a/an*, *the*, or *no article* have been introduced. Correct the mistakes, based on the explanations (a-c) in Grammar 1.

There is argument, on both economic and environmental grounds, for the countries to aim for slower increases in the numbers and higher growth in the tourist income. The visitors who spend more are clearly more valuable to local economy than those who spend less.

While US is third in number of the international tourist arrivals, it is a clear first in the tourist receipts, earning more than three times as much from the tourism as Spain and France.

Discussion

- 1 Do you agree that imposing a tourist tax of some kind is one way to at least cover the cost of having lots of tourists? Or do you feel that the extra money that tourists bring to the local economy is worth the disruption and nuisance they cause and they should not be put off by tourist taxes?
- 2 France, Spain and the USA are the top three international destinations. List all the points in their favour that you can think of? Are they top destinations for you, or do you have other preferences? Which ones and why?

ANSWER KEY**Reading comprehension**

- 1 N. No date is mentioned and the proposal still needs to be approved by the Scottish Parliament.
- 2 F. The proposal is for a £2 per night charge on all paid accommodation for the first week of a visitor's stay.
- 3 T. Venice has plans to impose an entry charge on day-trippers.
- 4 T. Many cities around the world have levies on hotel rooms.
- 5 N. The Italian Tourism Minister is not in favour of Venice's plans, but we are not told about other Tourism Ministers.
- 6 T. *There is ... a sense that the visitors are a nuisance ...and generally make a mess.*
- 7 F. *More go to Europe than anywhere else.*
- 8 T. *France, Spain and the US were the top three international destinations. The UK was seventh.*
- 9 N. Some people in those countries may think this, but it is not mentioned if most people think like that.
- 10 F. *Theatres and taxi drivers notice immediately when the tourists stop coming.*

Vocabulary 1

entry / tourist charge; levies

Vocabulary 2

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1 unreliable | 6 complacent |
| 2 proponents | 7 overrun |
| 3 spur | 8 legislation |
| 4 nuisance | 9 burden |
| 5 impose | 10 aimlessly |

Grammar 1

a = a/an

b = the

c = no article

- | | |
|-----|------|
| 1 c | 6 b |
| 2 b | 7 a |
| 3 a | 8 c |
| 4 b | 9 b |
| 5 c | 10 a |

Grammar 2

There is an argument, on both economic and environmental grounds, for countries to aim for slower increases in numbers and higher growth in tourist income. Visitors who spend more are clearly more valuable to the local economy than those who spend less.

While the US is third in the number of international tourist arrivals, it is a clear first in tourist receipts, earning more than three times as much from tourism as Spain and France.

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