



# Exploring Authentic Prague

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A Community Based Walking Tour

DECEMBER 14, 2023

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Leagsaidh Collis | Zephyr Conley

Jenner Johnson | Kyle Rabbitt



**WPI**

**Exploring Authentic Prague – A Community Based Walking Tour**

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By:

Leagsaidh Collis

Zephyr Conley

Jenner Johnson

Kyle Rabbitt

Date:

December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Report Submitted to:

Professor Lauren Elgert and Professor Philip Hultquist



*This report represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its website without editorial or peer review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see <https://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>*

## **Abstract**

The goal of this project was to address overcrowding at popular tourist destinations in Prague by developing a walking tour of an authentic, less-frequented Czech community. To discover the criteria and scope of walking tours, we observed commercial walking tours, interviewed tour guides, and tour companies. To discover what areas of Prague are often missed by tourists, the team also interviewed members of the local community. From this research, the team designed and published a self-guided walking tour of the New Town and Vinohrady neighborhoods aimed towards solo travelers staying in Prague for an extended time.

## Executive Summary

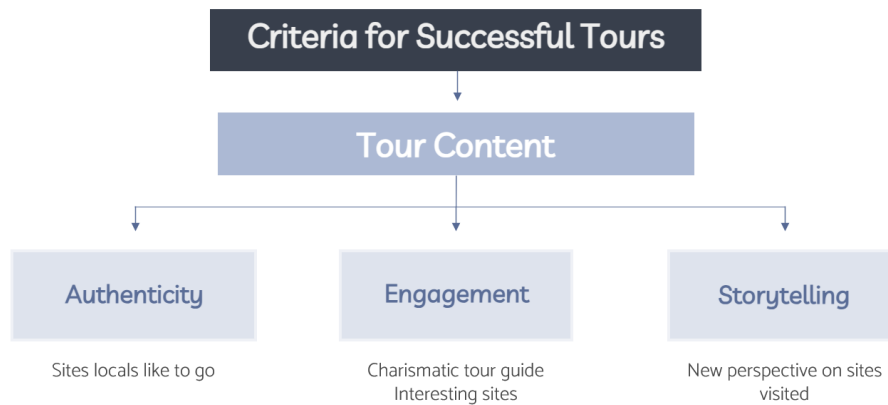
Tourism is one of the world's major economic sectors – and as it continues to grow globally, it fosters economic development, cultural exchange, and global awareness. While tourism has the potential to benefit a wide variety of stakeholders, such as local business owners, excessive tourist activity can lead to adverse social, economic, and environmental consequences. The concentration of tourists around Prague's most iconic sites has led to significant congestion in public spaces, crowded pedestrian routes, and a noticeable increase in visual pollution. Locals have been forced out of housing in the historical city center due to rising rent prices, with many avoiding the city center altogether due to the persistent overcrowding and tourist traps. Left unaddressed, overtourism can harm the preservation of Prague's cultural identity. To protect the city from this, Prague has adopted efforts to implement “sustainable tourism,” a method of tourism focused on long-term cultural preservation, supporting locals and tourists alike.

The goal of this project is to aid Prague's ongoing efforts around sustainable tourism and cultural preservation by developing a self-guided walking tour of authentic Czech culture outside the city center's most heavily visited area, the Royal Way. To support this goal, the team had several core objectives: understand the current scope of Prague's walking tours, determine criteria of a successful walking tour, identify authentic experiences in the context of Czech culture, and subsequently design and promote a walking tour to highlight the identified items. The team then developed a user guide that could assist others in developing their own free walking tour. Over the course of two months, the team conducted several phases of methodology to accomplish these objectives.

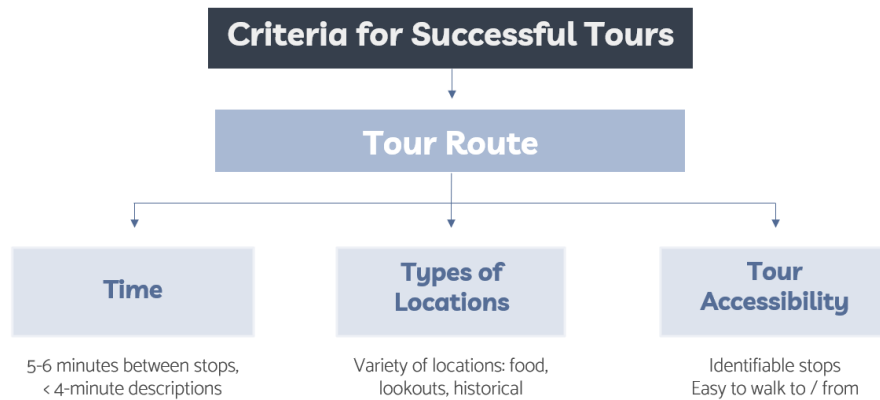
To understand successful elements of tours and areas for improvement, the team evaluated a wide variety of current walking tours offered in Prague. The team observed several walking tours and conducted structured interviews with three of the tour guides. The team then visited numerous coffee shops, bars, stores, and gathering places to gather recommendations and better understand the authentic aspects of Prague.

We used recommendations from locals and supplemental online content analysis to compile a list of hidden gems that align with the interests of tourists in Prague and reflect authentic Prague culture. The team was then able to develop a self-guided walking tour and publish it on two pre-existing tour apps.

From our observations of five walking tours of Prague, we developed criteria of successful walking tours, and organized our findings into the categories of tour route and tour content as shown below.



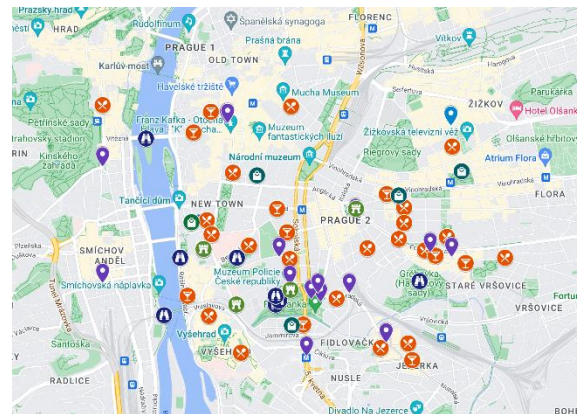
*Figure E.1: Concept Map for Tour Content*



*Figure E.2: Concept Map for Tour Route*

Nearly all free walking tours in Prague focus on the immediate areas encompassing the Royal Way. Tour companies were heavily dependent on tipping, resulting in a narrow scope of tour options that catered to the widest audience of tourists. While Prague has several self-guided tours, they focused only on historical sites and did not fully encapsulate the diverse definitions and perspectives of Czech culture from our conversations with locals. This supported the development of a free, independent tour that could better represent day-to-day life in Prague.

From the teams' interviews with locals, it was clear that Czech culture cannot be encapsulated by just historical buildings. Out of the twenty-two locals we talked to, including tour guides, residents of the area, and small business owners, many struggled to describe a picture of authentic Prague. We focused our questions on understanding the unique hidden gems of Prague, and over the course of several weeks began to develop a map of local recommendations. All these recommendations had some kind of emotional

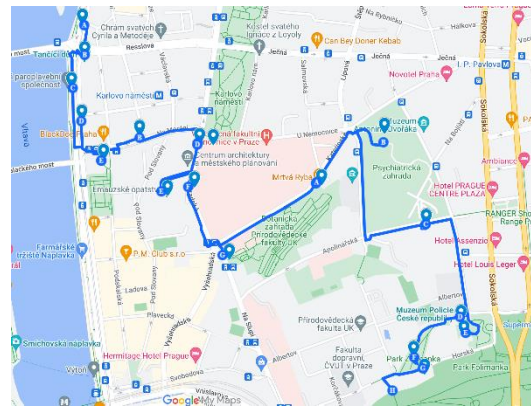


*Figure E.3: Compiled Map of Tour Recommendations*

importance for the locals we talked to. For example the Municipal Maternity Ward was mentioned by many of the people we interviewed, partially because of its beautiful architecture, but also because they had a family member or friend who had given birth there. We mapped a variety of places, including food, look-out spots, and small businesses – hoping to better encapsulate this section of Prague through the lens of its people and physical environment.

The team established a walking tour route by connecting nearby sites and following tour route criteria as defined from observations. The tour highlights 17 sites, starting at the Dancing House (Tančící dům) and ending near Vyšehrad.

The team used reputable online resources, such as Prague.eu, and Prague Tourism databases to research each identified stop. The stop descriptions describe the importance of each place, while also

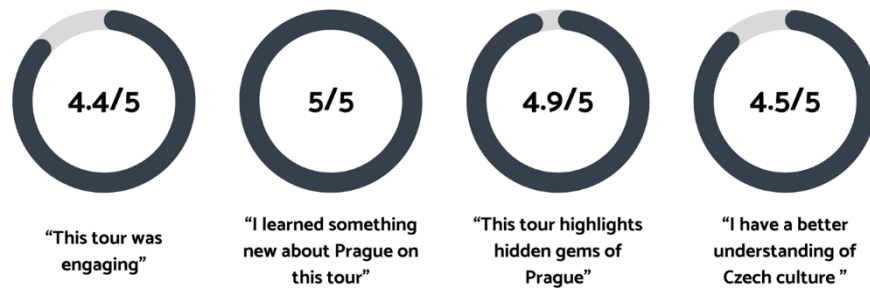


*Figure E.4: Implemented Tour Route*

connecting the stop to broader themes of culture and the unique aspects of Prague.

To identify the best walking tour app for publishing, the team evaluated nine of the most popular walking tour apps on features including ease of use for user and creator, GPS, and audio capabilities, amongst others. The team developed mockups to pilot test on the top two identified apps, PocketSights and izi.Travel.

Initially, the team intended to identify which of the two apps was the best by performing A/B testing in our pilot test. However, the team ultimately chose to keep both apps to broaden the outreach of the tour. At the end of the tour, the ten participants were given a survey asking them to rate aspects of the tour such as engagement, and any suggestions they had for improvement.



*Figure E.5: Pilot Test Results*

On a scale of 0-5, participants rated their level of agreement with the above statements. The survey results suggest that users were happy with the tour, supporting our successful walking tour criteria.

Following the feedback given in the surveys, the team made thorough revisions to improve the experience of the tour, including adding audio directions for better navigation, alternate route descriptions in case certain stops are closed, and redoing audio recording for uniform volume.

Should this tour get enough exposure, it will provide an engaging and exciting means of fostering a positive cultural exchange between both tourists and locals. While this tour will only be implemented on a small scale, it effectively showcases the potential of community-based walking tours to address overtourism issues. With the addition of our user guide, the project provides methodology and guidance for others to create their own tour and could assist in future developments of sustainable tourism. We hope this work inspires tourists to venture off the beaten track and fosters continued sustainability in Prague’s tourism industry.



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## Authorship

Section	Author	Editor
Abstract	Zephyr Conley	All
Executive Summary	Leagsaidh Collis	All
Acknowledgements	Leagsaidh Collis	All
1.0 Introduction	All	All
2.1 Emergence of Overtourism	Kyle Rabbitt	All
2.1.1 Implications of Overtourism	Zephyr Conley	All
2.2 Sustainable Tourism to Address Overtourism	Jenner Johnson	All
2.3 Authenticity in Tourism	Zephyr Conley	All
2.3.1 Defining Authenticity	Leagsaidh Collis	All
2.3.2 Significance of Authenticity to Local Communities	Zephyr Conley	All
2.3.3 Role of Authenticity in Tourist Satisfaction	Kyle Rabbitt	All
2.4 Walking Tours as Authentic Experiences	Leagsaidh Collis	All
2.5 Summary of Literature Review	All	All
3.0 Methodology	Leagsaidh Collis	All
3.1 Evaluating current walking tours	Jenner Johnson	All
3.2 Understand & Identify authentic, less-frequented destinations	Leagsaidh Collis	All
3.3 Design Walking Tour	Zephyr Conley	All
3.4 Promote Walking Tour	Kyle Rabbitt	All
4.0 Results		
4.1 Scope of free walking tours in Prague	Leagsaidh Collis	All
4.2 Criteria of a successful walking tour	Leagsaidh Collis	All
4.2.1 Tour Route	Kyle Rabbitt	All
4.2.2 Tour Content	Jenner Johnson	All
4.3 Understanding authentic Czech culture	Leagsaidh Collis	All
4.4 Designing the tour	Kyle Rabbitt	All
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## 1.0 Introduction

Central Europe has captivated tourists for decades, experiencing a 50% increase in tourist arrivals in the past decade alone (UNWTO). Tourism can have significant benefits for all involved – including heightened economic development and cultural exchange. While the positive implications of tourism are valuable and globally prevalent, an overabundance of tourist activity can cause negative social, economic, and environmental consequences (Theuns, 2008).

The popularity of the Czech Republic as a tourist destination has grown, with a 33% increase in tourist arrivals from 2014 through 2019 (Prague City Tourism, 2019). This large influx of tourists has led to overtourism, negatively affecting the city of Prague and its inhabitants. The conversion of local housing into hotels has led to a drastic increase in housing costs, and the subsequent migration of locals away from the city (Taiminen, S. 2018). The concentration of tourists along the Royal Way, a region encompassing Prague's most iconic sites, has led to congestion in public spaces, crowded pedestrian routes, and an increase in visual pollution and litter (Prague City Tourism, 2020). While many tourists are attracted to these sites because of their important historical significance, the abundance of tourists has prompted an increase in inauthentic experiences that are unrepresentative of Czech culture (Czech Tourism, 2022). Left unaddressed, overtourism has the potential to harm the long-term preservation of Prague's cultural identity, impacting tourists and locals.

One potential method to address overtourism is the implementation of sustainable tourism, a kind of tourism that “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNWTO, n.d.). Sustainable tourism has the potential to help support

Prague locals, improve tourists' experience, and improve the long-term cultural preservation of the city. Walking tours can contribute to cultural preservation by providing authentic experiences for tourists, while simultaneously prompting sustainable tourism in new, unexplored areas of Prague. Not only do authentic walking tours increase tourist satisfaction (Londoño & Medina, 2018; Lu et al., 2015), but they also disperse overcrowding at top attractions and promote lesser-known Czech businesses.

The goal of this project is to address overcrowding at popular tourist destinations in Prague by developing a walking tour of an authentic, less-frequented Czech community. The team plans to achieve this with the following objectives:

- Evaluate current walking tours on and outside of the Royal Way
- Understand and identify authentic experiences in the context of Czech culture
- Design an authentic walking tour of the identified experiences
- Develop a user guide that assists others interested in developing their own tour

Our in-depth research has determined that authentic walking tours as a form of sustainable tourism are a viable method for addressing overcrowding issues in Prague. Based on this conclusion, the team will use various methods including surveys, observations, and interviews to develop and promote walking tours featuring authentic experiences away from overcrowded tourist areas.

## **2.0 Background**

There has been a dramatic growth in global tourism in the past 70 years, with an increase from 25 million visitors in 1950 to a record 1.4 billion tourists in 2019 (UNWTO, n.d.). The rise of mass tourism started alongside commercialized air travel in the 1960s, and increased in the 1980s as planes became more efficient and affordable (Taiminen, 2018). Tourism in Europe accounts for half of global tourism, with 745 million visitors in 2019 (Statista Research Department, 2023).

Prague has a short history of modern tourism due to Nazi control during World War II and later the rise of communism and Soviet influence. While Prague has been a travel destination since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, tourism in Czechoslovakia was solely government-sanctioned domestic trips until the Velvet Revolution of 1989 (Horáková, 2010; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). The transition to a democratic Czech government prompted the reintroduction of foreign tourism. This switch led to a process of privatization where many international chains or local businesses bought up old buildings and refurbished them for accommodations (Light et al., 2020). Along with the switch came an influx of tourists that has continued to grow, with a 33% increase in tourist arrivals from 2014 through 2019, leading to concerns about overtourism (Prague City Tourism, 2019).

## **2.1 Emergence of Overtourism**

Overtourism is “the phenomenon whereby certain places of interest are visited by excessive numbers of tourists, causing undesirable effects for the places visited” (Sydney et al., 2015). The concept of overtourism dates to the 1960s with the ideological framework of the

Tragedy of the Commons. The Tragedy of the Commons is the concept that there is a maximum number of users supported in an environment without damaging a resource's quality. Factors such as planning, management, infrastructure, and goals affect the quantity of users a location supports (Wall, 2020). Wall (2020) applies the explanatory framework of the Tragedy of Commons to explain how the effects of overtourism diminish the quality of resources for locals and tourists alike. In the current day, this is seen when observing the impacts of overtourism on overcrowded cities such as Prague.

In the past 30 years, the city of Prague has become one of the top ten most visited cities in Europe, with the number of overnight guests rising from 5 million in 2012 to 8 million in 2019 (City Destinations Alliance, 2022; Czech Statistical Office, 2023). This growth has led to a rise in tourist density, with Prague being a highly tourist-dense city at 257 tourist arrivals per hectare, especially compared to other cities like Vienna, with 170 arrivals/ha (Prague City Tourism, 2020). The density of tourists in certain areas of Prague has negatively impacted the tourists and residents of the city.

### *2.1.1 Implications of Overtourism*

Although tourism has the potential to bring new commerce and industry to a country, overtourism has unintended consequences for the host country. In Spain, even though tourism accounts for 14.9% of the GDP and directly supports 2.8 million jobs, areas like Barcelona have experienced a spike in tourism-phobia and hostility towards tourist-centered businesses (Martin et al., 2018). This aggression towards tourists from locals arose as a direct consequence of the economic, environmental, and social-cultural issues caused by overtourism (Verissimo et al., 2020).



The economic impacts of overtourism are especially visible in the housing market. As the tourism industry has grown, so has the market for Airbnb's and other guest accommodation services. Landlords market these places as more representative of local life than hotels. In Europe, there were 168 million nights stayed in Airbnb's in 2022, which was a 20% increase from 2019 (Airbnb). However, the rapid growth of this industry has also caused housing prices to rise drastically in many popular tourist destinations (Capocchi et al., 2019). In European cities such as Barcelona, rising rent costs and higher prices at stores have forced people to relocate to poorer districts or move out of the city entirely (Taiminen, 2018). Airbnb rentals in Prague have also increased from 5,500 units in 2012 to over 14,000 in 2019, which leads to fewer apartments and higher prices, forcing many locals to move farther from the city center (Prague City Tourism, 2020).

Overtourism can also have a devastating effect on local physical and social environments if government policies are not put in place to protect them. Indeed, the phenomenon of overtourism had its early origins in national parks in the United States, where the Department of Agriculture found that certain areas had been "loved to death" (Wall, 2020). Today, many big cities across the world are beginning to feel the ecological impact of overtourism. The increase in pollution in popular destinations comes from a variety of sources including vehicles, sewage, and solid waste (Srinivas, n.d.). Additionally, the tourism industry is a huge consumer of water which can cause scarcities for locals. Hotels often promote amenities such as pools and golf courses, which consume exorbitant amounts of water (Srinivas, n.d.). Prague's own tourism board cited "tourist smog," the visual impact of tourists on the cityscape, as a major environmental impact on the city. Additionally, growing litter, noise from attractions, and "inappropriate behaviour of

some tourist revellers” negatively impacts the city’s physical and social environment (Prague City Tourism, 2020).

In addition to the environmental issues, locals are concerned that tourism is forcing them out of their communities (Taiminen, 2018). Cities such as Venice and Dubrovnik have seen a mass exodus of their residents as souvenir shops have replaced local pharmacies, bakeries, and tailors and cultural centers adapt to cater more directly to tourists. This has caused residents to leave as they no longer have access to necessities. This is also seen in Barcelona where La Boqueria, a market that used to be the main place for locals to shop has slowly begun to cater to tourists to the point that it no longer meets the needs of locals (Taiminen, 2018). This pattern of local migration away from tourist-occupied cities is prevalent across Europe. In Dubrovnik, a popular tourist destination in Croatia, the historic city center has a population of only 1,000 permanent residents, five times smaller than it was two decades ago. In contrast, during peak tourist season, the area will receive up to 15,000 tourists in a single day (Taiminen, 2018). This creates a depiction of a city that has no local people or culture anymore and is nothing more than a tourist-filled shell. One researcher’s remark epitomizes the problem, saying “Cities can die by three different ways: when they are destructed by an enemy, when a new civilization set up by force, expelling the natives and their gods and thirdly, when the inhabitants themselves lose their memory and become foreigners in their own city.” (Capocchi, 2019).

## **2.2 Sustainable Tourism as a Method to Address Overtourism**

Many cities are aware that their current tourism growth is not sustainable and can lead to a variety of social, economic, and environmental issues. The leading response to this overtourism

issue is through the promotion of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism can be summarized as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (Mihalic, 2020).

In 2015, Poland enacted its Tourism Development Programme to address its struggles with overtourism. This plan focused on the promotion of sustainable tourism with a list of priority areas: cultural tourism (historical landmarks), business tourism (meetings, conferences, etc.), active tourism (hiking, expeditions, etc.), health tourism (spas, etc.), and rural tourism (Poland, 2015). These focused areas of priority address the different negative social, economic, and environmental impacts of overtourism. Through investing in areas such as business tourism, this program provided an economic boost to local businesses. This investment further fostered the growth of these businesses through the creation of a positive feedback loop and connection between tourists and locals.

The Prague Tourism Board has developed a plan to combat overtourism, stating that “The long-term goal of Prague city marketing is not to achieve annual increases in arrivals. It is the development of the kind of tourism that brings the city all economic, cultural, and social benefits but does not jeopardize the quality of life of residents and is sustainable in the long term” (Prague City Tourism, 2019). To help encourage sustainable tourism, the board has identified several objectives. One of these is to improve support for products and services focused on domestic, cultural, and experiential tourism, as these have been lacking compared to international products and services offered by large multinational companies. The tourism board also aims to improve respect for local laws and regulations to minimize the negative impacts on locals’ quality of life caused by a minority of tourists. Like the solution Poland had, Prague is

dealing with this issue through promoting sustainable tourism to reap all the benefits of tourism while minimizing the drawbacks.

Prague City Tourism's final objective is to encourage the media, the tourism industry, and tourists to venture beyond the Old Town, which is a highly overcrowded area in Prague. While other consequences of overtourism, such as unaffordable housing and pollution, have a significant impact on the city, overcrowding is the most widespread issue impacting both people living in and visiting Prague. Due to these overcrowding issues, locals avoid the city center and isolate themselves from their historical roots. The team's walking tour will focus on addressing overcrowding in Prague.

### **2.3 Authenticity in Tourism**

Authenticity is defined as something that is “made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original” (Sydney et al., 2015). In the context of tourism, the concept of authenticity involves allowing travelers to experience real world life with locals, rather than staying in tourist-centered areas and being isolated from local cultures and communities (Authentic Tourism, 2023). A focus on authenticity can be used as an avenue to promote sustainable tourism as it prioritizes tourism that is socially and culturally relevant. It is a concept that affects all persons involved in the tourism industry, including locals and tourists (Zhou et al., 2015). Scholars and researchers often praise authentic tourism as a way of preserving host culture and promoting the spread of culture across the world (Maags and Svensson, 2018). However, some scholars criticize authentic tourism as it can cause tourists to

view local culture as a commodity that can be bought and sold, ignoring the rich history of a region (Zhou et al., 2015).

### *2.3.1 Defining Authenticity*

While perceptions of authenticity have a lack of “definitional clarity” (Newman, 2019, p.8), research defining authenticity in the context of tourism has identified three primary motivators of perceived authenticity: historical authenticity, categorical authenticity, and values authenticity.

Historical authenticity focuses on the way in which people evaluate authenticity through an object’s history, and its “connection to a valued person, place, or event” (Newman, 2019). In the context of tourist experiences, historical authenticity relates to the verifiable history of a destination. Historical Authenticity is frequently used as an umbrella term in research – encompassing Indexical Authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), Nominal Authenticity (Dutton, 2003) and Objective Authenticity (Wang, 1999). Each of these terms concern the way one distinguishes an original object from imitations. According to Newman & Smith (2016), this distinguishing is done via spatiotemporal cues, characteristics that help confirm where the object originates and when it is from. The context in which the object is viewed is strongly involved in interpreting historical authenticity. For example, in the context of art, a Van Gogh painting would be indexically authentic if it could be physically traced to Van Gogh, as he defines the importance of the object. Various cues could assist in the distinction between an authentic Van Gogh and a replica, and a well-trained eye familiar with his works will better identify relevant spatiotemporal cues than the average person. In this lens, when a destination has a long, deep-rooted, and significant history it is viewed as authentic.

Categorical authenticity, also known as iconic authenticity, describes how individuals perceive authenticity as the extent to which the item conforms to their existing beliefs. In tourism and other marketing-focused industries, this means the iconicity--the pre-existing image of a destination--has a large factor in the perception of its authenticity. The term used to describe this concept is verisimilitude (Deighton et al., 1989). When the preconceived notion of a destination matches a tourist's experiences, the destination is deemed authentic (Ram et al., 2016). For example, a Civil War reenactment would be perceived as categorically authentic if the props and uniforms match the viewers' expectations of that time period (Newman & Smith, 2016). Congruency between the tourist and the destination acts as the "essence of authenticity" (Dammann et al., 2021). This notion of authenticity mostly pertains to physical entities or objects. In the context of the tourist experience, this could be local food or souvenirs (Newman, 2019).

The final category, values authenticity, says that individuals perceive authenticity around the motivations behind the entity. In other words, Carroll and Wheaton (2009) define this as the attention to "whether the decisions behind the enactment and operation of an entity reflect sincere choices rather than socially scripted responses" (p. 255). Since this category is dependent on intrapersonal feelings, it can cause variation in perceived authenticity. This evaluation of authenticity is significant to the evaluation of performances, and artistic expressions (Newman, 2019). In application, for example, souvenirs that are hand crafted by local artisans are perceived by tourists as more authentic than gimmicks lacking a sense of sincerity in their creation.

It is essential to understand that these lenses work cohesively to form a perception of authenticity. Researchers theorize the synthesis of these categories as place attachment, the person-place bond that emerges from the congruent characteristics of a place with a person's

emotions (Ram et al., 2016). Ram et al. describe a study on four separate tourist groups in Helsinki and Jerusalem in which the relationship between perceived authenticity and place attachment was studied. In Jerusalem, tourists were found to have a greater place attachment to religious and heritage sites than in Helsinki. Additionally, tourists in Jerusalem also found the sites they visited to be more authentic. The study concluded that there was a causal link between place attachment and authenticity, which supports the theory that authenticity can be both symbolic and objective (Ram et al., 2016). With the synthesis of place attachment, authenticity simplifies to a strong emotional connection to a destination.

### *2.3.2 Significance of Authenticity to Local Communities*

Current tourism practices cause many tourists to never experience the authentic culture of the place they are visiting. Because of the short nature of most tourist trips, “rather than experiencing “something else,” the tourist “bubble” ensures that international tourists do not go anywhere real” (Zhou et al., 2015). This can lead to tourists developing inaccurate representations of the country they visited and spreading those ideas back to their host countries. Because of this, it is important to develop a strong understanding and appreciation of their host countries' authentic culture (Zhou et al., 2015). When locals share their authentic culture with tourists and tourists are eager to learn and understand, it enriches both parties.

As many cultures have experienced prejudice or an attempt to erase their culture by others, it is impossible to overstate the significance of an authentic cultural experience for tourists and locals (Maags and Svensson, 2018). This is in part due to the commodification of culture that occurs when tourists are interested in the local population. In Bali, the palace of Puri Anyar Kerambitan hosts two cultures, their authentic heritage, and a modified version of their

culture that they present for tourist consumption (Cahyadi, 2015). Cahyadi concludes that a modified culture can still be authentic if it does not add something new to the culture, use modern technologies, use a language other than the mother language, shorten a performance, or perform on a non-culturally relevant day. In Puri Anyar Kerambitan, the modified version of their culture is a representation of the original culture without important rituals and religious practices. Additionally, it preserves aspects of the original culture that have faded with time and are no longer actively used. By doing this, they protect their cultural heritage and current practices from commodification and objectification, while providing tourists with a more authentic connection to their culture.

In Prague, authenticity in tourism is a concept that is deeply important to residents. An interview with a tourist agent, Eva Illnerová, revealed that most Prague tourists can be sorted into four main categories: historically driven tourists, low-budget tourists, ‘blowing through Prague’ tourists, and beer-driven tourists. Tourists who do not care for the historical aspects of Prague are less popular in the eyes of locals (Dancy et al., 2021). The prevalence of tourists arriving in Prague to taste the alcohol is especially frustrating to locals. These tourists often ignore the rich history of Prague and are only there to taste the cheap beer. This annoys locals, who claim that “We [the Czech Republic] are more than a glass of beer and an ice hockey team” (Dancy et al., 2021). This demonstrates how the lack of authentic tourism in Prague has led to a false idea of the city’s culture to be perpetuated by tourists.

### *2.3.3 Role of Authenticity in Tourist Satisfaction*

Despite concerns that tourists visit cities to drink and party, most tourists desire authentic experiences. Tourists feel that when a location or interaction is authentic, they have a more



memorable travel experience (Morgan et al., 2010). Local interactions, food, and heritage destinations all impact tourist satisfaction. One study investigated the reasons tourists choose Airbnb's over hotels. Individuals reported that a stay in an Airbnb was more authentic due to meaningful interactions with a local about where to eat, what daily life is like, and the best attractions to visit (Paulauskaite et al., 2017). Another study conducted in Norway found that food origin stories and authentic meals enhanced tourists' experiences and satisfaction (Engeset & Elvekrok, 2015). Authentic activities and historical experiences also correlated with increased satisfaction during two studies conducted in 2015 and 2018. Historical authenticity is the historical traditions, architecture, and cultural heritage of a location and it was found to positively affect tourist satisfaction (Lu et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2018). As tourists desire more authentic experiences to improve their trip satisfaction, it is beneficial for cities such as Prague to help promote authentic sites.

## **2.4 Walking Tours as Authentic Experiences**

Walking tours can address overcrowding by directing tourists to unexplored areas. Free walking tours have gained huge popularity in major European centers, often focused on detailed introduction to the historical pasts of an area (Jennifer et al., 2022; Stach, 2017). These tours, mostly guided, "allow participants to obtain a cursory, up-close view of the environmental conditions in the neighborhood while watching the residents live their everyday lives" (Jennifer et al., 2022).

Due to the prevalence of walking tours across European cities, it is important to understand how they promote or discourage authenticity. While walking tours can deeply impact a tourist's destination image and place attachment (Londoño & Medina, 2018; Lu et al., 2015),

thus increasing perceived authenticity, walking tours can only be authentic when tour narration is anchored in urban space and meets tourists' expectations (Stach, 2017).

In a case study of Warsaw Jewish History walking tours, the narration of most tours focused on entertaining the tour-goers, specifically sharing fun stories and legends about the city. Some tours were found to dismiss reliable knowledge and city representation in favor of more entertaining discussions. Additionally, Warsaw Tours focused their tours solely on historical sites, which were only deemed authentic if they originated before or during World War II (Stach, 2017). However, tours consisting only of historical sites fail to capture the multi-dimensionality of authenticity, which includes historical, values, and categorical authenticity. Authenticity is just as rooted in the present day as it is in history, and truly authentic walking tours integrate both elements to create engaging experiences for tourists.

When walking tours highlight unique aspects of a city, beyond just historical interpretation, and frequented destinations, they can boost small businesses and social connections to locals. In the case of Austin, Texas, alternative walking tours focus on themes of socially and culturally relevant characteristics, such as food, art, and music (Jamrozy, 2007). These tours promoted economic development in new areas of Austin and created engaging opportunities for tourists while giving back to the local community. Conversations that occur during these walks build trust among visitors and community members (Jennifer et al., 2022) further promoting perceived authenticity. While walking tours are just one of many options to promote authentic destinations, their ease of use and flexibility allow for sustainable tourism practices.

## **2.5 Summary**

Although Prague has recognized the importance of sustainable tourism, overcrowding in popular tourist districts remains problematic. Overtourism has led tourists to have less satisfactory experiences in the city and continues to negatively impact the lives of Prague locals. While all aspects of overtourism are important, one of the most noticeable and widespread impacts is overcrowding. From this literature review, we conclude that walking tours are viable methods for distributing tourists out of the city center and providing experiences that highlight all three aspects of authenticity.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The goal of this project is to address overcrowding at popular tourist destinations in Prague by developing a walking tour of authentic, less-frequented Czech communities. The team accomplished this goal through the following objectives:

- Evaluate current walking tours on and outside of the Royal Way
- Understand and identify authentic experiences in the context of Czech culture
- Design an authentic walking tour of the identified experiences
- Develop a user guide that assists others interested in developing their own tour

The team conducted on-site research from October 21<sup>st</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup>. Based on the objectives, the team used a mixed methods approach involving observations, interviews, and surveys. The team observed five walking tours to determine the best practices for a successful walking tour. The team then conducted both semi-structured and unstructured interviews to gain a local perspective on lesser-known destinations. Along with the supporting conclusions of online content analysis, this project created and implemented a walking tour in Prague that highlighted these authentic places.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Scope of free walking tours in Prague

To understand the outreach of free walking tours in Prague, the team attended and observed five tours. Each free tour highlighted a different area of Prague, some guided and some self-guided through a third-party app.

<b>Walking Tour</b>	<b>Guided/Self-Guided</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Date</b>
Old Town & Jewish Quarter	Guided	Verneus	10/24/2023
20 <sup>th</sup> Century Tour	Guided	Free Walking Tour Prague	10/25/2023
Prague Castle District	Guided	100 Spires City Tours	10/27/2023
Vinohrady to Žižkov and Back Again	Self-guided	Prague City Tourism	10/26/2023
Vyšehrad	Self-guided	Prague City Tourism	10/30/2023

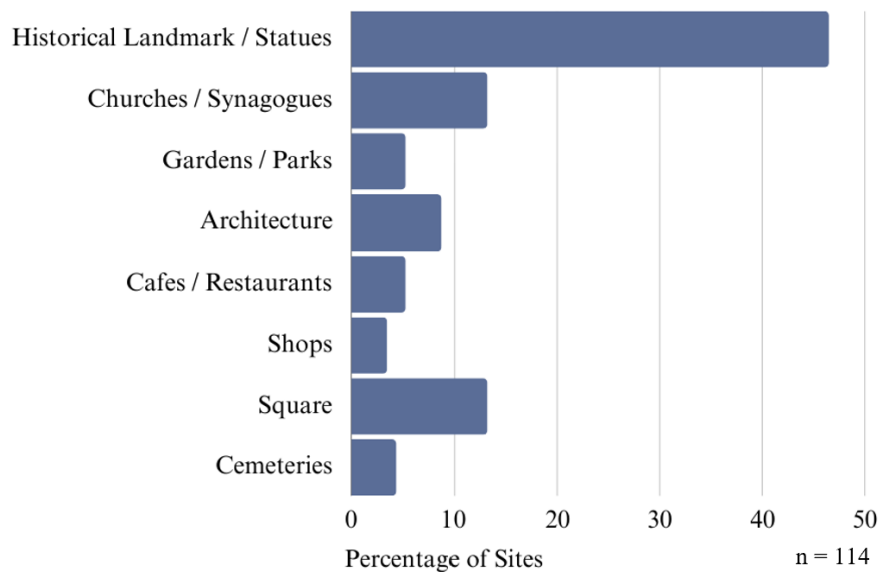
*Table 4.1: Table of Observed Walking Tours*

When selecting tours, it was clear that free guided tours offered in Prague were focused on the immediate areas encompassing the Royal Way. When we approached a guide for tour recommendations outside the Royal Way, the tour guide noted that due to the lack of interest outside the touristy city center, free walking tours are uncommon and not profitable for most companies. Since free walking tours are dependent on tipping, their scope is limited to areas that capture the interest of the most visitors to Prague. This supported our observations in our research, as when we looked for guided tours in new areas, the only ones we could find had expensive up-front fees.

Due to Prague's large, but heavily concentrated tourism industry, the team noticed competition between companies offering free walking tours. Since our project included a deliverable in the form of a walking tour, this made us a competitor in the eyes of many of the organizations that we were hoping to interview. The team emailed 14 tour companies and guides and heard back from six. From those emails, about half declined to answer our questions. Due to this, we were only able to arrange three interviews, and while these were integral to our project, the team had to rely more heavily on tour observations to evaluate their successful elements.

Upon further research, we identified several free, self-guided tours of Prague in areas outside of the city center. When we attended these tours, however, we found that they were difficult to engage with and focused only on historical sites. The app used was often glitchy, and the voice narration was robotic. Many Czech words were not accurately pronounced. While self-guided tours exist, they are not necessarily engaging or representative of a variety of aspects of Czech culture. From the guided and self-guided tours we observed, we recorded the category of sites visited, which can be seen below.

## Observed Walking Tour Location Types



*Figure 4.1: Types of sites visited on free walking tours*

This bar chart clearly shows that many sites visited were historical in nature such as a church, statue, or landmark. Almost 50% of the 114 stops on these tours were historical in nature. This makes sense as many tourists who visit are looking to see historical sites such as Prague Castle. However, creating a tour with a mix of historical stops, cafes, parks, and shops provides tourists with an experience that is more representative of authentic Czech culture. From these conclusions, there is a clear need for more free and accessible tour options outside the most heavily visited districts of Prague.

## **4.2 Criteria of a successful walking tour**

### *4.2.1 Tour Content*

When attempting to form a criterion for what is to be determined as a successful walking tour, an analysis of tour content is a crucial factor. As one local tour guide explained, the goal of his tour was to educate tourists on authentic Prague culture. This education aims to create an increased level of respect tourists have for a culture that is different from their own, while also potentially correcting any previously established misconceptions of Prague culture.

A method to capture the most distinct aspects of Prague culture is to incorporate both historical and cultural elements of the city. This provides tourists with a basis on which they can form educated opinions on the city's culture, while also confirming or addressing any previous knowledge of Prague. During the Old Town tour, the team observed one of the stops was outside of one of the metro stations. The guide then detailed how the public transport system in Prague functioned and gave general advice for being safe while traveling in the city. Though this may not seem immediately linked to Prague culture, knowledge of the best ways to navigate the city provides tourists with an inside perspective on an important aspect of daily life in the city, which is authentic culture.

These observations mostly fall under the historical and categorical lenses of authenticity. While the Old Town tour was strongly focused on historical landmarks, the tour guide incorporated discussion that addressed, or corrected tourists' preconceived notion of Prague. Our observations reinforce the conclusion that a broader education on day-to-day life in Prague was beneficial for tourists and provided a more authentic tour than historical description alone. For example, in the context of Prague, the stop description might explain Czech beer culture while

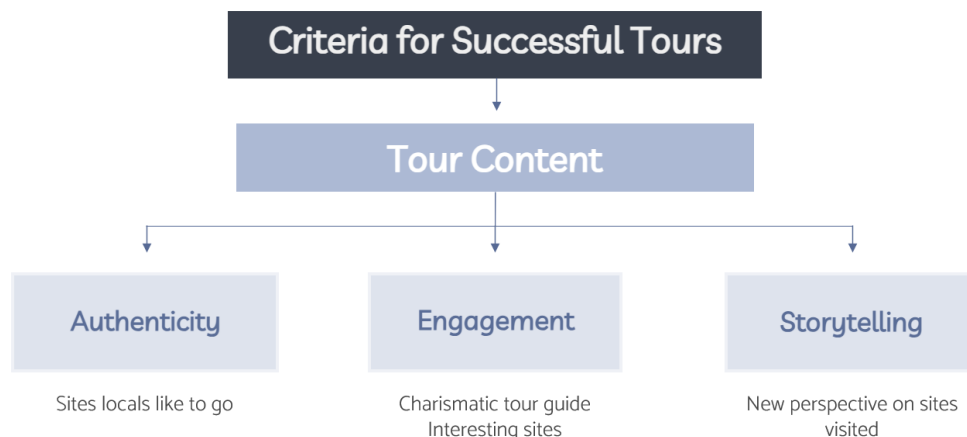


pointing out a popular bar or restaurant. This serves to educate tourists about authentic Czech culture that is relevant to modern local life.

Another important aspect of creating a successful tour is maintaining the engagement of the group. There are a variety of methods that enhance engagement, determined by both the sites visited and the tour guide themselves. During one of the self-guided tours that the team observed, we found that historic buildings lost their charm when making up several stops in a row. In the interview with the non-local guide, he mentioned the importance of also being humorous when trying to keep engagement. The team noted that during our tour with him, he would make a point to be entertaining past the basic level of just reciting a memorized script. We found this to create a much more enjoyable environment and resulted in a more attentive audience.

Engagement is heavily dependent a connection with the audience. This can be found difficult when presenting to a group of strangers from very different, international backgrounds. In an interview with a non-local tour guide, he found that his international experience helped him form immediate, close-to-home connections with some of his audience. In some cases, he may be from the same country of origin as a particular member of the audience which creates an obvious connection, but in others, it may be more difficult. He stated that despite living in Prague for the last six years, he still feels he is very much a foreigner, and uses this similarity to bond with much of his audience. During the interview with the local tour guide, he mentioned he prefers to hire guides with significant international experience as he also feels this provides tourists with an interesting perspective on the tour content. Since self-guided tours lose some of the personable interactions of a guide, some of these methods are not as applicable in promoting in engagement. Instead, it is important for the audio to avoid a monotonous tone, and possibly include different voices to add variety to the descriptions.

Perceived authenticity and tour engagement can be highlighted through a focus on storytelling. Storytelling through the lens of a relevant figure allowed for the audience to better empathize with them, resulting in a different perspective on the site. By telling the stories of local people and their business, a walking tour can promote feelings of sincerity and genuineness of the business’s goods. This then results in a stronger perception of values authenticity, the third lens of authenticity. Storytelling is also a means of engagement and builds connection between a guide and tour goers. During the observed Prague Castle tour, the local guide was able to share his experiences visiting the castle as a child with his grandmother. This method of presenting information to the audience made the tour feel more personable, and fostered communication between those on the tour, further enhancing overall engagement and tour satisfaction.



*Figure 4.2: Concept Map of Tour Content*

#### 4.2.2 Tour route

A key factor in creating a successful walking tour is determining the optimal route and content to maintain flow and engagement. Through our interviews with three local tour guides and observations of current walking tours in Prague, the team determined criteria for creating a successful walking tour, as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below. Creating an engaging route must

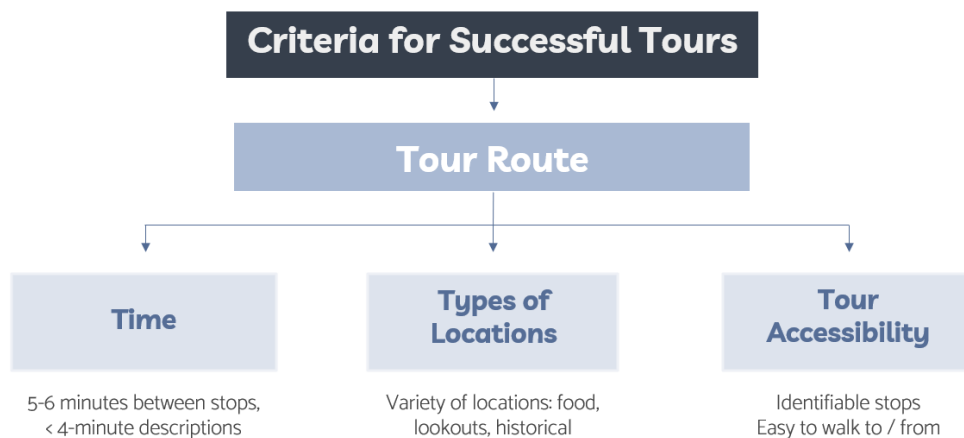
consider the types of locations visited, how accessible the route is, and the amount of time spent at each site and on the tour.

It is important for a tour to be comfortably walkable to keep visitors engaged and happy. Accomplishing this involves selecting sites that are appropriately spaced so there is no more than 5-6 minutes between stops. However, the sites also require a minimum distance apart to prevent an overload of information all at once. When at these sites, the information given needs to strike a balance between providing important and interesting information, while still maintaining the attention of tour users. In the case of self-guided tours, the amount of time audio is playing must be kept short to keep tourists engaged. Thus, the time spent at each site talking must be kept under four minutes for self-guided tours. This length can be extended with guided tours as the guides' charisma helps engagement. Following these recommendations also helps reduce the tour length, preventing tourists from becoming uninterested and unengaged.

When designing a tour route, the accessibility of the route should be considered. This includes the amount of walking necessary and length of tour. Sites that are spread out make visitors walk too far for the number of sites visited, creating an experience that is boring and inaccessible to those who may have mobility issues. The length of the overall tour also should be considered so that visitors have time left in their day to explore after a tour is finished. It is also important for a tour to be accessible from public transport. This allows more individuals to access the tour from the city center without needing to walk a long distance.

When creating a tour, incorporating different location types is important to highlight authenticity and keep engagement high. Through our observations and interviews, we determined that the most common and popular sites to visit on a tour are historical. These can be

a variety of locations such as Prague Castle, churches, and other important sites such as cemeteries or historical buildings. Visiting these provides travelers with an experience that fulfills the idea of historical and categorical authenticity, as these sites are iconic and are a defining characteristic of Prague in the eyes of tourists. However, including other types of locations such as cafes, restaurants, and parks boosts engagement and makes tours more informative. Adding these locations can serve to both introduce tourists to hidden gems while providing an opportunity to explain aspects of a local culture.



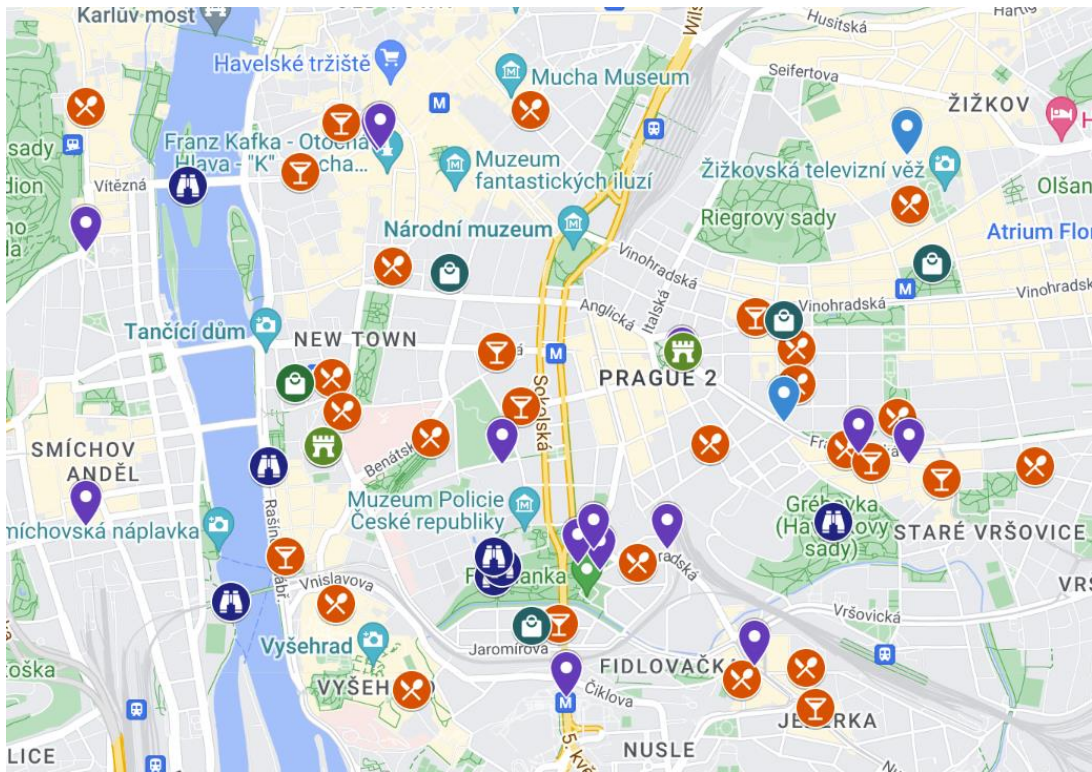
*Figure 4.3: Concept Map for Tour Route*

### 4.3 Understanding authentic Czech culture

Due to the subjective definitions of authenticity, interviews and recommendations from locals were essential to understand Czech culture. To develop a local perspective on Czech culture, the team interviewed a local involved in the tourism industry and a tour guide who has lived in Prague for six years. These interviews support the conclusion that authenticity is subjective, a perspective that is also backed by our background research. Both interviewees

believed that a person's upbringing, age, ethnicity, and personal beliefs all impact what they believe to be authentic. In our interview with a local involved with the food tourism industry, he reported that he personally felt that authenticity was centered around food. He shared that in his tours, he promotes authenticity by staying away from stereotypical dishes like pork knuckle and dumplings and bringing tourists to restaurants that he has a long history with. Despite this strong connection to authenticity and Czech culture, he was unable to create a specific definition of authentic Prague Culture, summarizing it as what locals enjoy doing.

From this definition of authenticity, the team compiled a map of a variety of hidden gems that locals frequent, primarily in the Vinohrady and Vyšehrad areas. The sites were given as recommendations from hostels, conversations with locals, and content analysis of numerous blogs, as outlined in the methodology. The hidden gems are primarily grouped into three categories: food, look-out spots, and small businesses. Since these places are favorites, frequently visited by locals, we can conclude that they are authentic to day-to-day Prague culture.



*Figure 4.4: Compiled Map of Local Recommendations*

When asked about creating an authentic tour, a local tour guide said that tours could be broken into two categories: tours that highlight the true authentic culture of Prague, the things that locals enjoy doing, and tours that align with tourists' preconceived thoughts of what authentic Prague culture is. To better understand the gap between these types of tours, the team surveyed 20 tourists on their expectations of Czech food, locals, and the physical environment. The survey questions are outlined in detail in Appendix C.

The survey revealed that tourists felt welcomed in Prague when they had positive experiences with locals – these came from a variety of encounters, most commonly conversations with shopkeepers, servers, baristas, and others. Many also noted that they felt connected to day-to-day life when using public transport frequently.

From these notes, we can conclude that tourists would benefit from a walking tour that facilitates more of these conversations. By encouraging conversations with locals, we promote a tour that does not cater towards the preconceived notions of tourists, but one that allows tourists to develop a more well-rounded perspective of Czech culture. These conclusions aided us in choosing the types of businesses we highlighted on the tour. We also decided to start and end the tour near tram stops to encourage tourists to use public transportation around the city. Since so many locals use the public transportation system, this also acts as a method for encouraging new conversations.

#### **4.4 Designing the tour**

From the compiled sites shown in the Google Map in Figure 4.4, the team examined which area had both easy access to public transport stops while having a variety of sites to visit. We then determined a preliminary tour route that maintained a maximum spacing between sites of five minutes. Once the preliminary route had been determined, we analyzed different walking tour software to determine which product had the features desired. We then created a mockup walking tour by developing detailed descriptions for each site and recording audio for each stop. A pilot test was then run to determine issues with our selected apps and areas for improvement.

##### *4.4.1 Analysis of walking tour software*

To determine what walking tour software was best suited for our project, we did in-depth research to accumulate a variety of different tour software and then evaluated them based on the criteria we determined were most important to our project. The list of tour software can be seen below in Table 4.2, which was then developed into a decision matrix.

Each piece of software was scored on a scale from 0 to 5 on the categories of ease of use for user, ease of use for creator, GPS navigability, audio capabilities, and pictures and written descriptions. Of our initial nine apps, four were ruled out due to certain features not being available and the remaining five were ranked and analyzed accordingly.

Walking Tour Decision Matrix							
5 excellent, 4 good, 3 satisfactory, 2 mediocre, 1 bad, 0 unusable							
	Cost	Ease of Use for User	Ease of use for creator	GPS Navigability	Audio Capabilities	Pictures and Written Descriptions	Total
izi.Travel	5	5	3	5	5	5	28
PocketSights	5	3	3	4	3	5	23
GeoTourist	5	2	3	2	5	5	22
Clio	5	3	4	2	4	4	22
Echoes	5	3	2	3	5	3	21
SmartGuide	<del>5</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>0</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>23</del>
Voicemaps	<del>0</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>2</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>20</del>
Google Maps	<del>5</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>2</del>	<del>2</del>	<del>0</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>18</del>
Marzipano	<del>5</del>	<del>0</del>	<del>3</del>	<del>0</del>	<del>0</del>	<del>5</del>	<del>13</del>

*Table 4.2: Decision Matrix of Walking Tour Software*

From this decision matrix we picked the two apps that ranked the highest, PocketSights and izi.Travel, and designed the tour on each one. As neither of these apps had existing walking tours around Prague, pilot testing each of them allowed us to get more in-depth feedback on the benefits and setbacks of each software.

#### 4.4.2 Walking Tour Mockup and Pilot Test

To create a tour that was the most engaging and intuitive for users, the team developed a mockup of the walking tour that contained the rough sites that were to be included. The team then went on the tour three times in the next few days. The first time, the team just did a walkthrough of the route while timing the walks between stops. During this trial, the team used Google Maps. This was to help understand which stretches of the tour needed additional stops to break up the walking. After reviewing the tour and including additional stops, the team went on



the tour for a second time with the beginning of the tour posted on PocketSights. This trial was to ensure that PocketSights functioned as expected while also checking that the spacing between sites on the tour had improved. The third trial was done with the entire tour posted on both izi.Travel and PocketSights, including written and audio descriptions. This trial made sure that the published tours were of a good length and easy to follow in preparation for further testing.

The team then utilized a pilot test to get feedback on the tour and changes that needed to be made. The participants were split into even groups so that both PocketSights and izi.Travel could be tested. After each user completed the tour, a survey was completed that ranked various statements on a scale from 0 to 5, with five being very satisfied. Based on our ten users who completed the tour, we found that on average, tour users rated the statement “This tour was engaging” a 4.4 out of 5. Additionally, all pilot test users stated that they all learned something new about Prague on the tour and rated the statement “This tour highlights the hidden gems of Prague” at an average of 4.9 out of five. All users also rated that they have a better understanding of Czech culture at a 4 or above, with an average of 4.5 out of 5.



Figure 4.5: Pilot Test Survey Rankings

Users were also asked about their experience using whichever walking tour software was assigned to them. Both apps were found to be user-friendly and enjoyable. Users noted that

PocketSights did not have the ability to autoplay audio when you were at a stop but remarked that the app was still enjoyable without this feature. As users still enjoyed using the app despite this unsolvable issue, we decided to keep the app on the site instead of just using the tour on izi.Travel. Lastly, the stop locations on both tours were tweaked slightly due to users having trouble accessing them. The stop locations were brought closer to the sidewalk for PocketSights while the trigger zones for izi.Travel were adjusted.

While tour participants all had positive ratings about our tour, there were numerous comments provided, highlighting potential changes that could be made. Common themes emerged from these responses that were later incorporated into the final walking tour. One frequently mentioned recommendation was to improve the directions on the tour. Many users felt that it was hard to find the next sight on the tour. Additionally, the tour app drained phone batteries very fast so many users requested audio directions, so they could use their phone less. Spoken directions were added at the end of each site, highlighting how far to walk, where to turn and when to cross the street. Another frequent comment was due to the unforeseen closure of certain walking paths, due to weather conditions or time of day. This created issues in following the tour route and reaching the next site. The team decided to add additional directions into site descriptions, providing alternative paths to use in case of closure. The audio accompaniment was also rerecorded to include warnings about operating hours and improve the audio quality. Finally, we received feedback that two sets of our tour locations, the first being the Faust House and Lunar and Leli's Cupcakes and the second being the Police Museum and the Church of the Virgin Mary, were too close together. This was causing issues with the GPS zones for each stop, so audio was added to alert users that there is a stop very close by. This audio tells the user to click on the numbered stop on the map, avoiding users accidentally missing a site.

Considering all the comments and ratings given by pilot test users, the team was able to revise the pilot test tour to create a final walking tour that is the most engaging and intuitive experience possible. Based on the feedback about both tested apps, the team concluded that PocketSights and izi.Travel were both suitable apps to host our walking tour. To help boost visibility, we determined it was ideal to keep both apps updated with our final walking tour.

#### 4.4.3 Revised Tour Overview

The revised tour can be viewed through the izi.Travel and PocketSights apps and their corresponding website. The tours are published with our team’s name, “Authentic Prague” and can be found by searching the tour name “Exploring Authentic Prague” in the search bar feature.

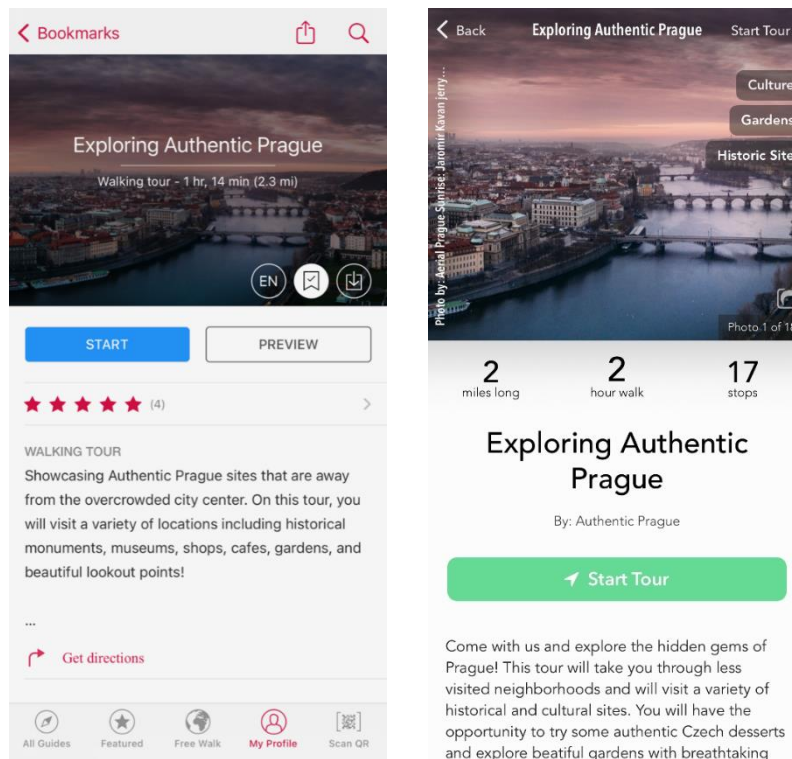


Figure 4.6: Landing Page for izi.Travel (left) and PocketSights (right)

Both apps start the tour at a landing page, with the title, short description, milage, and estimated time length. From this page, the tour stops can be previewed, and users can leave a

review on their experience. For izi.Travel, users can download and bookmark the tour for future reference.

Once the user clicks start, the navigation and itinerary are displayed. Both apps assist the user in navigating from site to site and provide a clear route map of all connected destinations.

This easy-to-use overview allows users to skip sites or revisit them.

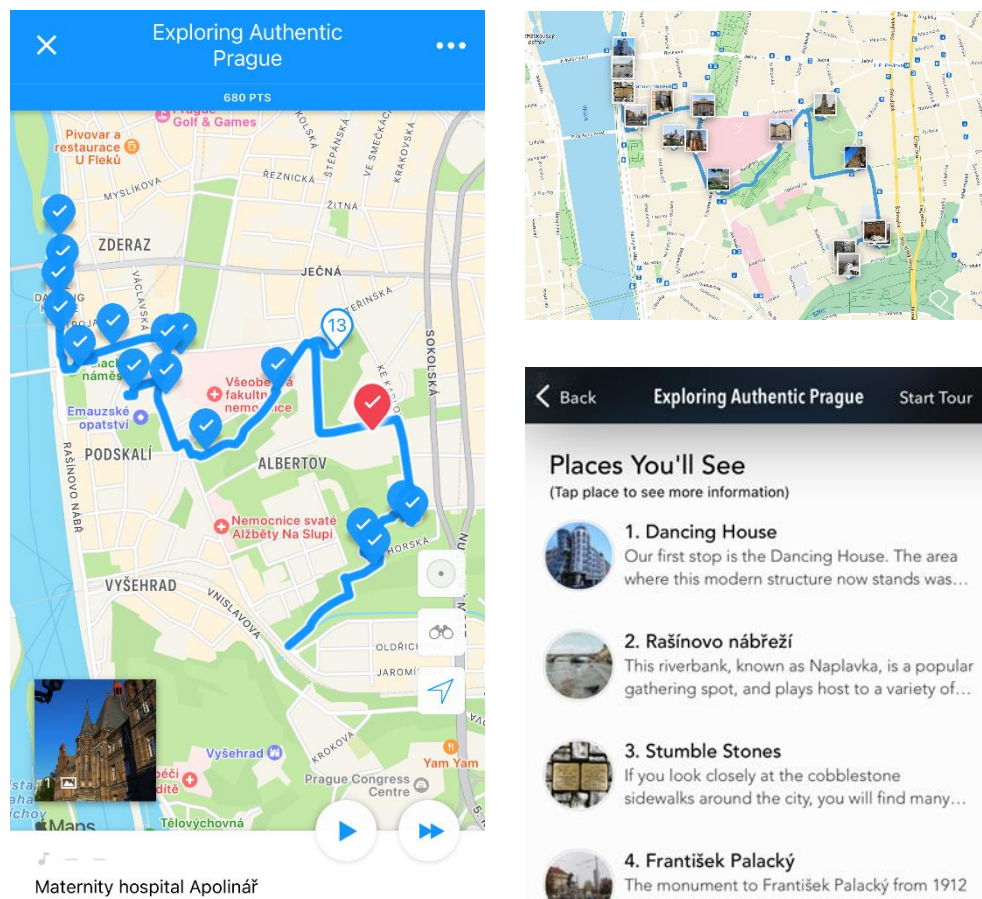


Figure 4.7: Navigation of izi.Travel (left) and PocketSights (right)

When arriving at a designated site on the tour, izi.Travel will automatically show the site description and begin playing the corresponding audio. PocketSights will automatically notify

you of the destination but will not autoplay the audio. However, when the site is opened, the tour description and audio is clearly displayed.

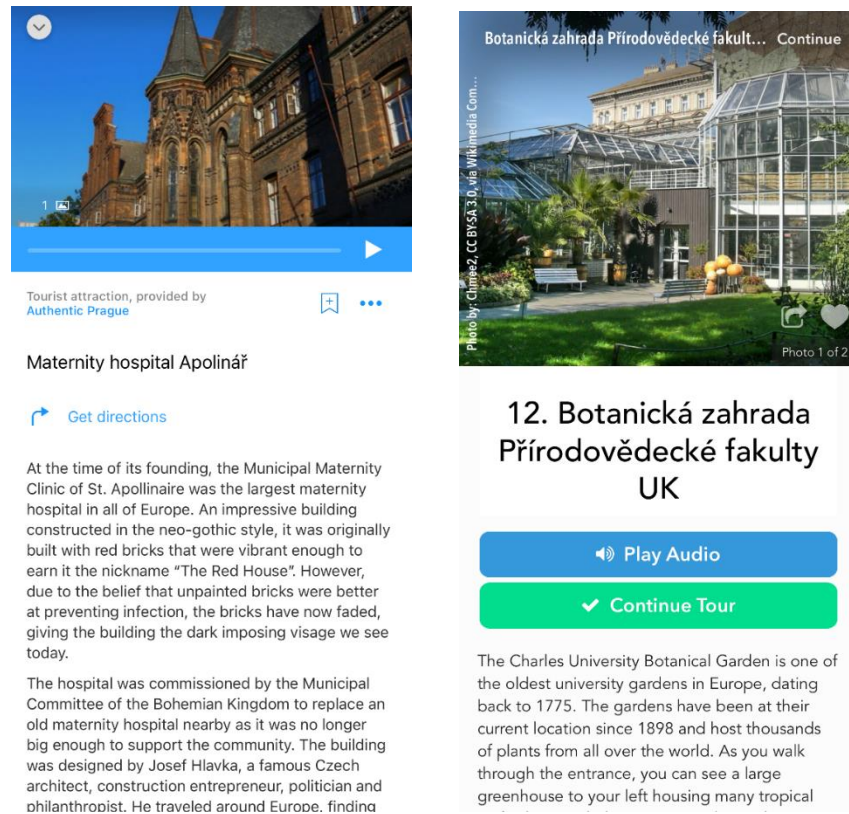


Figure 4.8: Site Description on izi.Travel (left) and PocketSights (right)

Overall, these tours provide an accessible and engaging means of exploring authentic Czech culture outside the Royal Way.

#### 4.4.4 Tour Infographic

To spread our compiled knowledge about designing engaging walking tours, the team created an infographic. This provides the reader with essential information on how to develop a self-guided walking tour in a digestible format. This infographic is viewable in Appendix E.

An infographic was chosen as an additional deliverable for this project to preserve the research the team did on successful walking tours and to expand outreach for this project beyond Prague. Over the course of this project the team has gathered and compiled a vast amount of research and resources for the design of a successful walking tour. We hope to provide a resource to help other users create walking tours on various apps. With overcrowding being such a widespread issue in Prague and other parts of the world, the ability to spread our research to a wider audience can help address this issue to a much greater extent than one walking tour can.

The infographic outlines the process to create a walking tour in the form of a roadmap, and consists of five sections: Tour Criteria, Identify Potential Stops, Develop the Route, Publish Your Tour, and Evaluate. The first section, Tour Criteria, starts with the concept map shown in Figure E.1 that depicts the criteria for successful tour content. This section also includes a short paragraph explaining why walking tours are important and how they help to combat overcrowding in popular tourist destinations.

The infographic continues into the Identifying Potential Stops section, which includes a picture of all the sites we gathered in our research as well as recommendations for gathering sites. To increase visual appeal, this section also has a “Tip!” section that describes how Google Maps can be used to plan the initial route of the tour. Next, the Develop the Route section depicts an example route on Google Maps and explains the best timing for a tour, how you should include a variety of sites, and how to make the tour accessible to tourists. These sections are depicted in small textboxes and use visuals to make the infographic more appealing.

The next portion of the infographic explores the publishing and revising portions of creating a walking tour. The Publish Your Tour section includes examples of good

supplementary materials to include in your tour as well as our suggestions for good apps to use. The Evaluate section explains how pilot testing and user surveys can be used to improve upon your tour and acknowledge user feedback.

After creating the infographic, we decided to contact PocketSights to see if they would be interested in our recommendations. Since we are familiar with their app and their company goal aligns closely with our project goal, we found them to be the ideal audience for our infographic. We sent an email to them explaining our project and thanking them for their app and included the infographic as a supplemental material. We have not heard back from the company, but we are hopeful that our infographic will be a valuable resource to them.

## 5.0 Conclusion

With its rich history and culture, Prague has grown to be one of the most visited tourist destinations in Europe. As a result of this increase in tourist activity, Prague has fallen victim to overtourism, which has significant negative impacts on the city, such as overcrowding. Many tourists tend to focus their visits solely on the crowded Royal Way, which is home to many of the famous historic sites, but also many inauthentic attractions. As a means to divert tourists out of the Royal Way, the team developed a self-guided walking tour through nearby neighborhoods. By placing the walking tour outside the Royal Way, the team also hopes to give tourists the opportunity to experience authentic aspects of Czech culture that they may not have experienced otherwise.

While one tour alone cannot resolve the issues of overcrowding, the work of this project highlights the value of free, self-guided tours to address overcrowding. Additionally, the team's infographic works to expand the outreach of this project, providing tourism companies and apps with a resource to further address overcrowding in Prague and beyond. PocketSights, izi.Travel, and countless other apps are excellent demonstrations of how technology can build and educate community culture.

Increasing the scope of people who can access our research will hopefully increase the number of engaging walking tours that can collectively address overcrowding. Beyond creating more walking tours, further research could be conducted on how to increase participation rates and more effectively market free, self-guided walking tours.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Consent Forms

#### Tourist Survey Consent

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Massachusetts, USA and are working on a collaborative project with Professor Marie Keller of WPI to address overcrowding of tourists in the city center in Prague. The purpose of this survey is to gain a tourist perspective on Prague. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Please remember that your answers will remain anonymous. No names or identifying information will appear on the questionnaires or in any of the project reports or publications. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at [gr-authenticprague-b23@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-authenticprague-b23@wpi.edu). For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact [irb@wpi.edu](mailto:irb@wpi.edu).

#### Pilot Test Survey Consent

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Massachusetts, USA and are working on a collaborative project with Professor Marie Keller of WPI to address overcrowding of tourists in the city center in Prague. The purpose of this survey is to gain feedback on our walking tour. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Please remember that your answers will remain anonymous. No names or identifying information will appear on the questionnaires or in any of the project reports or publications. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at [gr-authenticprague-b23@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-authenticprague-b23@wpi.edu). For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact [irb@wpi.edu](mailto:irb@wpi.edu).

#### Interview Consent

We are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts, USA working with Professor Marie Keller of WPI to address overcrowding issues in Prague. We are conducting interviews to better understand authentic sites in Prague and local communities. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any question that we ask. This interview is confidential—no names or identifying information will appear in any project reports or publications *unless* you agree to have your name published.

With your permission, we will be recording this interview and using the recording for transcription purposes.

Should you have any questions or concerns upon completion of this interview, we can be reached at gr-authenticprague-b23@wpi.edu. For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact Ruth McKeogh at rmckeogh@wpi.edu or irb@wpi.edu.

[Asking individuals for verbal consent prior to the interview or survey]

Do you consent to this interview?

Do you consent to having this interview recorded?



## Appendix B – Interview Questions

### Interview #1 Questions:

1. What prompted you to start your blog?
2. How do you decide on what content to post?
3. Why did you become a tour guide?
  - Do you have experience designing walking tours? If so, how do you choose which locations to visit?
  - What are some characteristics of a successful walking tour?
  - What are some strategies you use to keep tourists engaged?
4. What areas of the city do locals tend to visit on their days off?
  - What are some hidden gems you would recommend in these areas?
5. Do you know anyone who would be interested in talking with us about walking tours or tourism?

### Interview #2 Questions:

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
  - Career path
  - Interests
2. Can you tell me a bit about [organization]?
  - How was it established?
  - Who's involved?
  - What are some short term and long-term goals of [organization]?

3. How do you think tourism has affected Prague since you've been involved in the industry?
  - Negative and/or positive effects
  - Has this impacted your business at all?
4. Can you tell me about the process you took to develop your food tours?
  - How do you go about finding locations on your tour? Criteria?
  - What makes a great tour or tour guide?
  - How do you keep people engaged on your tour?
5. Do you know of any places we should explore in the Vyšehrad area?
6. Do you know of anyone else that may be interested in talking to us?
7. Would you be interested in seeing and/or using our final deliverable?

Interview #3 Questions:

1. What is your experience in the tourism industry?
2. Can you explain more about how freelance guides work?
3. In your opinion, what makes a good tour guide?
4. How has tourism affected your day to day life?
  - Positive and/or negative affects
5. Has crowding in the city center affected your walking tours? If so, how do you address this?
6. What is different about Czech culture compared to other locations you have visited or lived in?
7. What are some characteristics of a successful walking tour?
8. What are some strategies you use to keep tourists engaged?

9. How do you incorporate storytelling in your walking tours?
10. How has that impacted your tours?
11. Can you tell me about yourself?
  - Career path
  - Interests
  - What brought you to Prague?
  - As someone who hasn't lived in Prague all their life, how do you think your background has affected your perspective on the city?
  - What is different about Czech culture compared to other locations you have visited or lived in?
12. What is your experience in the tourism industry?
13. Can you explain more about how freelance guides work?
14. How has tourism affected your day to day life?
  - Positive and/or negative affects
15. Any locations or experiences that you think tourists should visit that they often miss out on?

## Appendix C - Survey Questions

### Pilot Test Survey

#### *Tour Content Questions*

On a scale of 1-5, please rate your opinion on the following statements:

1. This tour was engaging
2. This tour included a good variety of sites
3. The site descriptions were informative and interesting
4. This tour highlights hidden gems of Prague
5. I learned something new about Prague on this tour
6. I have a better understanding of Czech culture after this tour
7. I think this tour showcased authentic Prague

8. How long did you spend on this tour? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How was the length of this tour?

Way too short, too short, good length, too long, way too long

10. The audio accompaniment made the tour more enjoyable

Did not use, not helpful, no effect, they were helpful, they were amazing

11. How many of these sites had you visited prior to this tour? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Would you recommend this tour to others? Yes/No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you have any suggestions to improve this walking tour? \_\_\_\_\_

### *Software Questions*

14. Which app did you use for the walking tour?

- A
- B

15. Did you encounter any issues with the app while on the tour? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Was the tour route easy to follow on the app? \_\_\_\_\_

### Tourist Survey

1. How long have you been in Prague?
2. What areas of Prague have you visited?

On a scale of 1-5, please rate your opinion on the following statements:

3. I value historical destinations as part of my tourist experience
4. Czech food is what I expected it to be
  - What surprised you and why?
5. Prague looks how I expected it to be
  - What surprised you and why?
6. Prague locals are what I expected them to be
  - What surprised you and why?
7. I've have had positive experiences with locals in Prague
  - What was the best experience?
8. I've felt welcomed as a tourist in Prague

- What made you feel most welcomed?
9. I feel connected to Czech daily life
- What made you feel most connected?
10. The objects I have engaged with in Prague (food, art, drinks, etc.) are made with care and sincerity.
- What made the objects this way?
11. What would you like to see in Prague that you haven't?

## **Appendix D - Observations**

### Walking Tour Observation Outline:

Locations visited:

Date:

Time / Length of Tour:

Observer(s):

Tourists' engagement:

Location Types Visited: Restaurant/Café, Store, Museum, Heritage Site/Monument, Street Performer, Park, Other

Authenticity of Sites:

Evaluation Tour Guide: Knowledge, enthusiasm, clarity

Demographics:

Social Interactions:

Accessories: Audio for self-guided tours, maps, pamphlets

Timetable:

Tour #1 Observations:

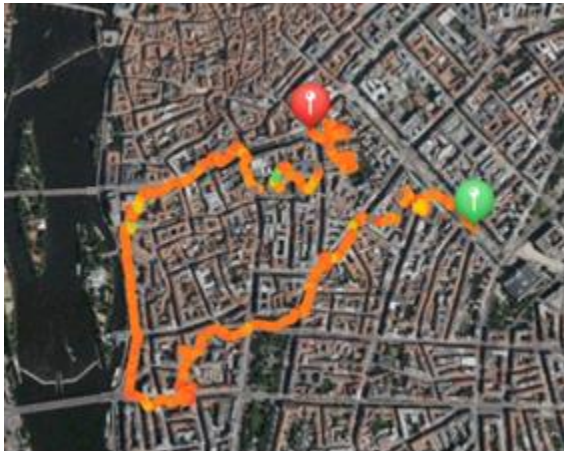
Locations:

- Wenceslas Square
- Lucerna Velky Sal
- Kostel Panny Marie Snezne – “The Church of Our Lady of the Snows”
- St Cyril and Methodius Church Crypt
- Dancing House
- National Theatre
- Café Louvre
- Franciscan Garden and Church

Time / Length of Tour: 10:30-1:00 PM, 2 hours, 30 minutes

Observer(s): Leagsaidh Collis, Zephyr Conley, Jenner Johnson, Kyle Rabbitt

Route:



**Observations:**

Tour Content: Focused on the history of communism and the Nazi invasion in the New Town. Discussed different architecture styles and their presentation in surrounding buildings.

Tourists' engagement: Some tourists had gone on a tour with this guide already, felt comfortable asking questions or staying later. Tourists would ask questions when walking, not during stops. Tourists came in pairs and mostly stuck to themselves. Overall, less engagement than the Old Town walking tour from the day prior. One tourist attended one of the guide's previous tours and hung around to ask questions at the end of the tour.

Location Types Visited: Heritage Sites/Monuments



Authenticity of Sites: Primarily focused on architecture and historical significance of selected sites. Some sites were interesting but not authentic.

Evaluation of Tour Guide: Tour guide was from Mexico. She has lived in Prague since 2012 and has been doing tours in Prague since 2019. Stops were fewer but long and more in depth. The guide felt less engaging than the Old Town tour. Ileana was more focused on getting her facts across whereas the guide from the Old Town tour added comedy and some personalization.

Demographics: Tourists were mainly from Europe. Various ages took the tour with the majority aged 30-50.

Social Interactions: A little interaction between tourists, not many individuals asked the tour guide questions.

Accessories: Shown a few pictures of the Nazi occupation of Prague and historic pictures of sites visited.

Timetable:

14 minutes – history of Wenceslas square, walls between new town and old town, King Charles, horse market, World War 2, communism, story about two students that burned themselves in protest during the velvet revolution. People started going on their phones and not paying as much attention after about 8-9 minutes.

6 minutes – communist hotel, history, architecture, bunker. Bookstore and clothing store. Referenced how an old Czech lady she is friends with used to go to the clothing store and hotel.

5 minutes – Czech resistance, statue, communism

1 minute – Great Hall

1 minute – Wenceslas statue (dead horse), history of statue and ownership of building

1 minute – Art in building, architecture

1 minute – Pastries and coffee

1 minute – First McDonald's in Czechia

10 minutes – Never ending elevator. People had to go in three at a time, others were bored when waiting.

2 minutes – Cattle market, first townhouse and tower in the New Town, first defenestration, defenestration reenactment.

7 minutes – assassination of the butcher of Prague, fall of Naziism, church, history of parachuters who assassinated the butcher and hid in the church

25 minutes – exploring crypt and church

5 minutes – dancing house, constructivism, Americans suck (accidentally bombed Prague instead of Germany in WWII and killed hundreds)

- 6 minutes – national theater, brutalism, racism, Vaclav Havel
- 2 minutes – fancy buildings
- 2 minutes – memorial to the velvet revolution
- 3 minutes – restaurant and café recommendations
- 2 minutes – Franciscan gardens and our lady of the snow church
- 2 minutes – cubism
- 7 minutes – history of religion in Czechia

## Tour #2 Observations:

### Locations:

- Old Town Square
- Churches of Tyn and St. Nicholas
- Defenestrations of Prague
- Astronomical Clock
- Charles University
- The Estates Theater
- Powder Tower
- Franz Kafka
- Spanish Synagogue
- Jewish Cemetery
- Old-New Synagogue

Time / Length of Tour: 11-1:30 PM, 2 hours, 30 minutes

Observer(s): Leagsaidh Collis, Zephyr Conley, Jenner Johnson, Kyle Rabbitt

### Route:



## Observations:

Tour Content: Focused on storytelling – often phrased historical events in an easily digestible context, used supporting materials (pictures and maps) to help. Gave modern tips and tricks to the city, but descriptions were focused on historical significance and city demographics.

Tourists' engagement: Many people asked each other and the tour guide questions. He stopped a few times to offer recommendations for things such as souvenirs and detailing certain scams near the Old Town. Tourists interacted with each other, giving suggestions on areas to visit. Everyone (?) left a tip.

Location Types Visited: Heritage Sites/Monuments

Authenticity of Sites: Primarily focused on historical significance, discussed how tourism numbers have led to inauthentic experiences/scams and how to avoid them. Destinations were iconic and very busy.

Evaluation Tour Guide: Tour guide was from Spain, has done tours for 16 years in many locations. Lived in Prague and done tours here for 6 ½ years. Very personable and friendly.

Demographics: Tourists were mainly from Europe. Two rough age groups, 50+ and student aged.

Social Interactions: Many interactions between individuals on the tour.

Accessories: Shown maps and pictures of Soviet / Nazi era Czech Republic

Timetable:

4 minutes – How to use public transportation in Prague

4 minutes – How to safely exchange money or use an ATM in Prague, brief history on Franz Kafka, visited the house he was born in

8 minutes – Old town square, Jan Hus got burned at the stake, four people got defenestrated, introduction to astronomical clock

8 minutes – history and description of astronomical clock

3 minutes – architecture and history of old town square (baroque, gothic, facades, etc.)

3 minutes – holocaust stones (small bronze stones depicting holocaust victims set subtly into the paths in Prague)

5 minutes – Czech resistance and Nazism

4 minutes – Czech opera and Mozart

3 minutes – Charles university (architecture/people)

1 minute – Souvenirs, how to determine if a souvenir is authentic to Czech culture

3 minutes – Powder Tower and Old castle walls surrounding the stare mesto

1 minute – Church of St. James

10 minutes – other tours, common Prague dangers (pickpocketing), scams

4 minutes – Kafka, Spanish Synagogue

1 minute – Intro to Jewish quarter

10 minutes – History of the Jewish Quarter

4 minutes – cemetery

2 minutes – more cemetery

2 minutes – Philharmonic Orchestra

10 minutes – Holocaust and Tourism

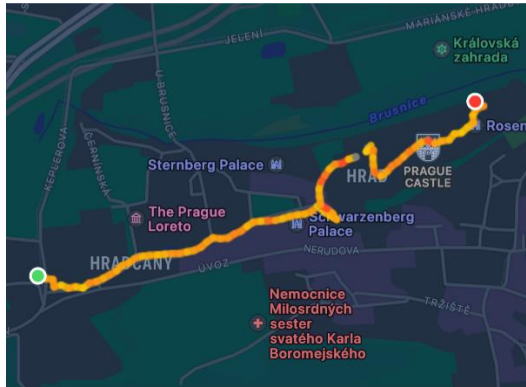
Tour #3 Observations:

Locations: Prague Castle District

Time / Length of Tour: 3-5:30 PM, 2.5 hours

Observer(s): Leagsaidh Collis, Zephyr Conley, Jenner Johnson, Kyle Rabbitt

Route:



**Observations:**

Tour Content: Focus on the history of Prague and the castle district. Covered how society changed from a monarchy to a republic and the impacts this had on the surrounding city. Used supporting pictures to give people a better understanding of covered topics.

Tourists' engagement: Tourists were engaged and asked the tour guide many questions. He also stopped and provided recommendations for what to do after the tour such as various breweries.

Location Types Visited: Historical Sites

Authenticity of Sites: Historical authentic sites.

Evaluation of Tour Guide: Local tour guide, very engaging and frequently talked about his own life in Prague at different locations around the castle.

Demographics: Very large international group – about 40 people divided into two groups.

Social Interactions: Interactions between tourists and the guide.

Accessories: iPad with supporting images

Timetable:

6 minutes – history of Prague, Kepler

7 minutes – defenestration, Edward benes, church where Jesus was born

3 minutes – martini palace, first lamps in Prague

6 minutes – archbishop palace, Italian palace, other palaces, five different architecture styles, prayer columns for plague

4 minutes – main palace, guards, Amadeus movie

5 minutes – guard change, past two presidents of Czechia

5 minutes – gardens (Italian/Japanese), Greek amphitheater

1 minute – first Christian church and history of Czech native tribes

2 minutes v- Swedes theft and current use of castle

9 minutes – cathedral, art, history

2 minutes – architects of the cathedral

3 minutes – architecture styles on church and clock

2 minutes – old church and history of gothic architecture

6 minutes – history of castle additions, third Prague defenestration, great hall, jousting

1 minute – Sait George Basilica, Adam and Eve towers, baroque façade, oldest house in Prague

3 minutes – Maria Tresa house for girls, Hapsburgs

5 minutes – golden lane, history of people who lived there, wall, what life was like in that part of Prague

## Tour #4 Observations

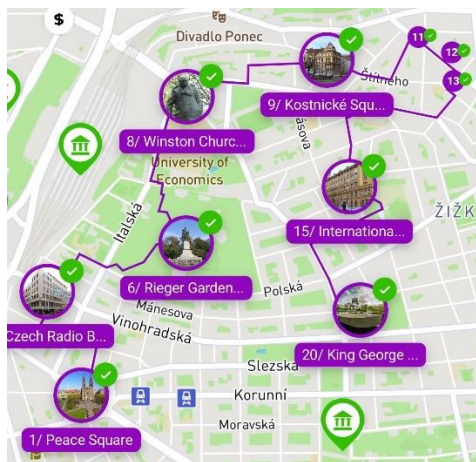
### Locations:

- Peace Square
- Church of St. Ludmila
- Vinohrady Theatre
- Czech Radio Building
- Na Smetance School
- Rieger Gardens and Viewpoint
- Winston Churchill Square
- Kostnické Square
- Žižkov Theatre of Jara Cimrman
- Prokopovo Square
- Bethlehem Chapel in Žižkov
- Havlíčkovo Square
- Sladkovského Square
- International Telephone Exchange Building
- Old Jewish Cemetery at Žižkov
- Žižkov Television Tower
- Škroupovo Square
- Švehla Dormitory
- King George of Poděbrady Square
- Church of the Most Sacred Heart of our Lord

Time / Length of Tour: 11-12:45 PM, 1 hours, 45 minutes

Observer(s): Leagsaidh Collis, Zephyr Conley, Jenner Johnson, Kyle Rabbitt

### Route:





## **Observations:**

Tour Content: Significantly more based on getting a feel for a neighborhood than an in-depth history of the neighborhood. Some sites had in depth information while others only had a few sentences. The longest description was ~5 mins, most were 30-60 seconds. Tour did not have a strong theme; locations were not as cohesive as the ones in the historical center of Prague (though it could be due to going through neighborhoods rather than famous historical regions).

Tourists' engagement: Not as engaging compared to a guided tour due to a robotic voice and no transitions between sites. Too much or too little information at sites led to less engagement.

Location Types Visited: Historical buildings, gardens, churches, cemeteries

Authenticity of Sites: Primarily focused on architecture and historical significance of selected sites.

Evaluation of Tour Software: Tour software was easy to use, with audio playing automatically when reaching a site. However, navigating during the tour was a bit difficult as there were no turn-by-turn directions. The app was also glitchy with the audio not always playing. Unsure if recorded audio can be used or only robotic text to speech. The audio also had poor speaking ability, sometimes changing pronunciations mid description.

Social Interactions: Fairly minimal discussion of each location visited. We would often remark on how brief the descriptions were of places.

Accessories: Robotic audio transcriptions played at every location. Pictures of the site along with a link to their website were also provided. Some sites also listed if entering was free of charge.

# Appendix E – Infographic

## DEVELOPING YOUR OWN FREE WALKING TOUR

### 1 TOUR CRITERIA

Walking tours promote cultural preservation and sustainable tourism by providing authentic experiences for tourists, reducing overcrowding at popular attractions and supporting lesser-known businesses.



### 2 IDENTIFY POTENTIAL STOPS

To emphasize the unique aspects of a community, consider the following:

- Seek local recommendations from residents
- Look at blog posts and other digital content that showcase distinctive features
- Talk to hostels and other areas where the community's culture is concentrated



#### TIP!

Document any recommendations through google maps. It is a free, easy to use software that will make your community highlights easy to visualize!

### 3 DEVELOP THE ROUTE

Now that you've compiled a list of authentic places in your community, it's time to create a route.



#### ROUTE AT A GLANCE

##### TIME

At stop: 5 - 6 min  
Between: < 4 min  
1.5 - 2 hours

##### VARIETY

Look out spots  
Food  
Historical Sites

##### ACCESSIBILITY

Begin / End: Near public transit

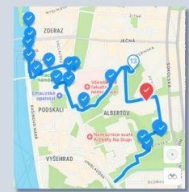
### 4 PUBLISH YOUR TOUR

There are a wide variety of free, easy to use apps that you can publish your tour on. We evaluated nine apps on the following key features, and recommend PocketSights and izi.Travel as the best options.



PocketSights

izi o TRAVEL  
the storytelling platform



#### TIP!

Include supplemental materials such as audio recordings, pictures and descriptions of each stop. This makes a tour much more engaging!

### 5 EVALUATE

Pilot tests are a great way to evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of your tour. We recommend compiling a list of objectives you want your tour to accomplish and creating a survey that asks tourists to critique how well the tour met those objectives!



"This tour was engaging"



"I learned something new about Prague on this tour"



"This tour highlights hidden gems of Prague"



"I have a better understanding of Czech culture"

#### Want to Learn More?

Our Tour Our Research



#### ABOUT US

We are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA, who created a walking tour to showcase Prague's authentic culture and move foot traffic away from the city center. We have researched what makes a successful walking tour and created an infographic to share our findings with others interested in creating their own tours.

