

VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS TO SUPPORT ENGLISH TEACHING ONLINE

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Introduction

Virtual tours of museums, wildlife safaris and space stations or online art exhibitions can be very useful for providing a change of pace while teaching remotely and making online lessons visually vibrant, relevant and fun. There are a wide range of online tours available from all over the world. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring culture and life into your virtual classroom.

Getting started

- Do some research into the types of tours that are available to choose the one most appropriate for your learners. Consider the content but also the type of audio/video support they provide (including language levels) and any wraparound resources.
- You will need to help learners become familiar with navigating the chosen website. These websites often require learners to use several functions, such as the arrow keys on the screen, screen tabs, etc., to virtually 'move' through a museum or a space station. It's a good idea to do a quick orientation before you set up any activity.
- Planning is key. This will help learners stay on track, ensure you have appropriate content for your lesson and potentially reduce risks to your learners.
- There is often a lot happening in these virtual tours, so you may want to select specific artefacts or sections to focus on in the lesson. This will ensure your learners don't get distracted on the website and stick to the task.
- Be clear about what the learning objectives are for your visit, in terms of both language and skills development.
- Most wildlife safaris are live, so you may want to find a recording for your lesson so you can plan according to what they see.

Ideas for pre-visit activities

- Send short reading/audiovisual content, related to the topic, as pre-visit tasks. This is a good way to provide input which will then be supported by the virtual tour.
- Set up activities which require learners to guess what the visit will be about. You can use jumbled words/phrases, incomplete pictures, audio description or clues.
- Announce the visit and ask learners to conduct interviews with friends and/or family members about the location of the visit – what do they know about it already?
- For a wildlife safari, you can ask learners to guess the animals they may see.
- For younger learners, raise curiosity by asking them to imagine what it will be like and draw a picture of what they expect to see.
- Give a list of three locations and ask learners to vote. To do this, they take a quick look at the tours to make their choice about which to look at in detail, with tasks.

Ideas for activities during the visit

- Guide your learners through a virtual tour yourself during the lesson and give information, with your learners answering questions you have shared with them.
- If the virtual tour helps you teach a topic or language point from your textbooks, you can teach those points and then take a short tour to 'show' what you taught.
- Teach directions using virtual tours. You can give a set of directions to different groups and ask them to locate the object or painting the directions lead to. This can also be a competition.
- Set up different locations for different groups and then come together to discuss what they saw.
- Set up a treasure hunt. Ask different groups to find a specific artefact and note the location and the information about the artefact.
- If you are using a wildlife safari, ask learners to write a story based on what they see.

Ideas for activities after the visit

- Do a quick quiz based on the virtual tour.
- Ask learners to create a virtual tour of their own homes, gardens or parks nearby.
- Set different writing tasks for learners. They can write stories, blogs, reviews, emails to friends/family or poems.
- Select four to five artefacts or objects that they have seen during the virtual tour. Ask the learners to find more information about these and then record a short audio file to introduce the object to the rest of the class.

Things to consider

- **Permission and privacy:** For kids and teenagers you'll need to get make sure parents know about the virtual tours or wildlife safaris you are using for your lessons. You may want to orient parents to your lessons. Make sure you check privacy settings on the sites your learners will visit.
- **Data usage:** For these activities, learners will need good internet connectivity and a computer or a laptop.

Useful links

- An article from *Time Out* magazine with links to virtual tours: <https://bit.ly/RTTTimeOutTours>
- Virtual wildlife tours: <https://bit.ly/RTTWildlifeTours>
- *Good Housekeeping's* list of best virtual tours: <https://bit.ly/RTTGHTours>

Note: The idea for this document came via the teacher survey we released in March 2020. As the survey was anonymous, we are unable to credit the person who mentioned the idea, but thank you!