

# Writing Workshops as Cultural Tourism: A Case Study and Discussion on this evolving form of tourism

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is regarded as ‘the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs’ (Richards, 1996). Writing workshops and retreats (in both Australia and around the world) are held in such diverse locations that the very definition of ‘normal’ can be considered irrelevant. From surf writing camps in Mexico (Sayulita Writers Workshops) to historic houses in England (Arvon Foundation), the range of experiences available would surely satisfy anyone’s ‘cultural needs’.

This paper looks at the evolution of one particular community-based writing workshop over a 5 year period. It examines the growth and development of the workshops, held annually on North Keppel Island, Qld and hosted by *Idiom 23* Literary Magazine.

Data demonstrates and accounts for the growth and success of the workshop and this will be used to add weight to a larger discussion regarding the growth of the writing workshop as Cultural Tourism. Comparisons and contrasts will be made with other successful workshops held in Ubud, Bali and Larapinta, Alice Springs to answer these important questions.

## IDIOM 23 ON NKI

- 2005: A Sense of Place 35 attendees
- 2006 Kanomi Writing Workshop 32 attendees
- 2007 Being at Byfield 28 attendees
- 2008 Footprints in the sand: writing as a journey 42 attendees
- 2009 Weaving Words on Kanomi 32 attendees
- 2010 Memory and Memoir: Writing Your Life 25 attendees

## IDIOM 23 ON NKI: IN-DEPTH

### Curriculum:

- Writing and the environment; sessions on poetry, prose and song-writing
- Sensory-based writing workshops on remote beaches, inter-tidal walks facilitate an appreciation of the historical and ecological importance of the island

### Feedback:

- Change in focus; life writing and memoir sessions dominated the workshop.
- Less poetry, more prose; advanced-level sessions, extended writing time

## ANALYSIS

Success and appeal of workshops determined by:

- status of facilitators
- location
- an all-inclusive experience

The equivalent of a package-deal holiday

- Lifestyle activities – yoga, bushwalking, surfing – adds to the allure
- Images of exotic locations:
- Promote the lifestyle and cultural tourism elements of the experience
- Captures the leisure market area of the tourism sector
- Inspires initial interest

## POSSIBILITIES

- Writing activities have been incorporated into new writing subjects at CQUniversity
- Enrolments in M(Litt) program
- Writing workshops may benefit tertiary institutions
- Offer short courses and retreats in their offerings
- Related to the institutions geographic location

## CONCLUSIONS

- Writing workshops and retreats provide specific experiences for a particular clientele
- They largely exist outside of the university sectors scope
- Combine travel and writing; focus on life writing; highlights access to lifestyle activities
- An ideal option for budding writers not seeking tertiary qualifications
- Universities with access to exotic locations or unique facilities could provide workshops to enhance existing programs or to compliment non-degree programs
- Writing workshops occupy a unique position in the tourism industry, and continue to develop as their own form of cultural tourism