

# THE PICTURESQUE AND THE RISE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM

[Tintern Abbey](#), Wales



# UNDERSTANDING TOURISM

People went on tours for various reasons:

- To see the great cultural centers of Europe
- To discover Nature untouched by man
- To acclaim the *native* beauties of British landscape invoking idealized foreign models
- To ‘improve’ on nature, even if only through the use of the imagination

# Grand Tour

- The term “Grand Tour” was introduced by Richard Lassels in his 1670 book *Voyage to Italy*.
- The tourist industry grew to meet the needs of affluent teenagers and their tutors across the heart of the European continent.
- The young tourists carried letters of reference and introduction with them when they left their home country.



# Grand Tour continued

While the goal of the Grand Tour was educational, a great deal of time was spent in more frivolous pursuits like extensive drinking, gambling and intimate encounters.

The journals and sketches that should have been completed during the Tour were often left quite blank. A Tourist didn't carry much cash money, because of highway robbers, so letters of credit from their London banks were presented at the major cities of the Grand Tour.

Many Tourists spent a great deal of money abroad and due to these expenditures outside England, some English politicians were very much against the institution of the Grand Tour.


The Grand Tour as an institution was ultimately worthwhile because it contributed to great improvement in British architecture and culture.



- 
- \* With Calais as the landing point, a significant portion of the Grand Tour ran through France.

# The best laid plans . . . .





The Grand Tourists were primarily interested in visiting those cities that were considered the major centers of culture at the time - Paris, Rome, and Venice were not to be missed.

Paris was definitely the most popular city because French was the most common second language of the British elite, the roads to Paris were excellent, and Paris was a most impressive city to the English.

Florence and Naples were also popular destinations. The Grand Tourist would travel from city to city and usually spend weeks in smaller cities and up to several months in the three key cities.

# TROUBLE, TROUBLE, TROUBLE


The French Revolution in 1789 made travel on the Continent dangerous, especially for British citizens, who were thought to be potential spies.





Travelers could be made uncomfortable, or end up in trouble.


The key idea of grand tourism—learning in leisure—was undermined.




The Grand Tour recovered a little bit after the Revolution, but then railroads totally changed the face of tourism and travel across the continent.

The old leisurely trek in a horse-drawn coach took months if not years, and nature could be appreciated.

The railroad emphasized destination over journey.

- 
- \* Luckily, writers had been exploring and reporting on the countryside of Wales, North England, and Scotland since the 1750s.
  - \* Their descriptions provided an alternative to Britons who wanted a Grand Tour.

- 
- \* In 1755 John Dalton, a Doctor of Divinity, published *A descriptive poem, addressed to two ladies, at their return from viewing the mines near Whitehaven*, an epistolary lyric which was an early attempt to elicit sublime feelings from industrial locales in the northwest of England. On their way home from the Cumbrian coast, the ladies pass the “roofs” of Keswick, where “Skiddow” is “supreme of mountains. . . to whom all Britain sinks a vale!”




Skiddaw Mountain, with Derwentwater in foreground.

Snyder photo 2016

Several years later, Dr. John Brown contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* a letter that included a description of Derwentwater as "a perfect mirror, and the landscape in all its beauty, islands, fields, woods, rocks, and mountains, are seen inverted, and floating on its surface" (185). Yet, under other conditions of atmosphere, the area around Keswick can be "a vast amphitheater . . . of rocks and cliffs of stupendous height, hanging broken over the lake in horrible grandeur, some of them a thousand feet high, the woods climbing up their steep and shaggy sides, where mortal foot never yet approached." Tumbling down the spectacular hills is "a variety of waterfalls . . . pouring from their summits, and tumbling in vast sheets from rock to rock in terrible magnificence." In the distance appear "new prospects in the mist," which leave the eye in "an agreeable perplexity." Capturing the spectacles of Keswick would require, in Brown's estimation, "the united powers of Claude, Salvator, and Poussin" (184).



Derwentwater from Crow Park, Keswick. Snyder photo, 2016




An admirer of both Dalton and Brown, poet Thomas Gray (whom you will remember from *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*) spent ten days in and around Windermere, Keswick and Grasmere in October of 1769. Carrying a notepad and a set of Claude glasses, Gray circumnavigated the [North Lakes](#) and kept a diary that provided a more detailed record of opportunities for picturesque compositions from low or elevated points of view.

# Picturesque and the Grand Tour

- These published reports during the second half of 18th century established the idea that scenic pleasure was available in the British Isles. Touring began to take hold among the English leisured class. The term “Picturesque” emerges.
- [William Gilpin](#) invented the term to apply to scenes in nature that resembled paintings. He wrote several treatises on ways that landscape could be appreciated.

- \* It strove for a middle ground between the Beautiful and the Sublime.
- \* The added layer made the Picturesque different, and thus was a growing phenomenon in landscape presentation, both poetry and painting, from 1770 to 1820.
- \* A typical Picturesque image contains Beautiful and Sublime, but has key add-ons: a quality of ruggedness and roughness, and a frame around the image. The name comes from artist-tourists who would seek certain scenes in nature that “resembled a picture.”



Gilpin's work as painter and writer was a direct challenge to the ideology of the well established Grand Tour, showing how an exploration of rural Britain could compete with classically oriented tours of the Continent.

- Picturesque theory offered a collection of techniques and aesthetic values that helped facilitate the appreciation of landscape.
- The Northern Tours (The Lake District and Scotland) became a kind of domestic Grand Tour.

## “Picturesque” as a term

- There are many theories as to where exactly the term “picturesque” originated, and details of the etymology are unclear. However, the Picturesque movement had its greatest influence and popularity in the late 1700s.
- The use of the word “picturesque” in literature and art emerged early in the 1700s, generally referring to a “poetical painting”- which could have meant a well-composed landscape painting or a poem that used words to “paint” (describe) the beauty of nature.

# Picturesque vs. the Grand Tour

- The techniques and aesthetic values offered in Picturesque tourism were of a wider variety than that of the Continental Grand Tour.
- The irregular, anti-classical ruins, and even ruined people-- the ragged poor, gypsies, beggars, and orphans (viewed from a safe distance of course) -- became sought- after themes.
- British citizens could also get a glimpse of their cultural artifacts, as painters and engravers produced sketches of buildings, such as cathedrals, abbeys and estates.



Furness Abbey, Joseph Farington, 1786

# THE TOURIST

- \* Was really a connoisseur trained in the classical literature and familiar with the work of [Claude](#), [Gaspard Dughet](#) and Salvator Rosa
- \* The earliest tourists tended to draw on the classical writers to enhance their descriptions of scenery, especially when they traveled in countries already celebrated by those poets
- \* The tourist was a “man of taste” –more educated than illiterate spectators


# PASTORAL TOURISM

- Classical Pastoral poetry presented a world describing peace and leisure and innocence
- A tour was a means of seeking such qualities, as well as natural beauty
- Pastoral tourists often heightened their pleasure by associating the scenery with idyllic images recalled from the poets -- particularly Roman Augustan poets Virgil and Horace.
- The Picturesque tourist would attempt to find “prospects” in the landscape: scenes that could be imagined as paintings.

# LAKE DISTRICT

- Picturesque hunters began crowding the Lake District to make sketches using 'Claude Glasses' - tinted portable mirrors to frame and darken the view, and named after the 17th century landscape painter Claude Lorrain, whose work Gilpin saw as synonymous with the picturesque and worthy of emulation.





Gilpin's series of illustrated tourbooks in the 1790's codified picturesque landscape as irregular in line, rough and rugged in texture, intricate in detail, and sharply contrasting in light and shadow.



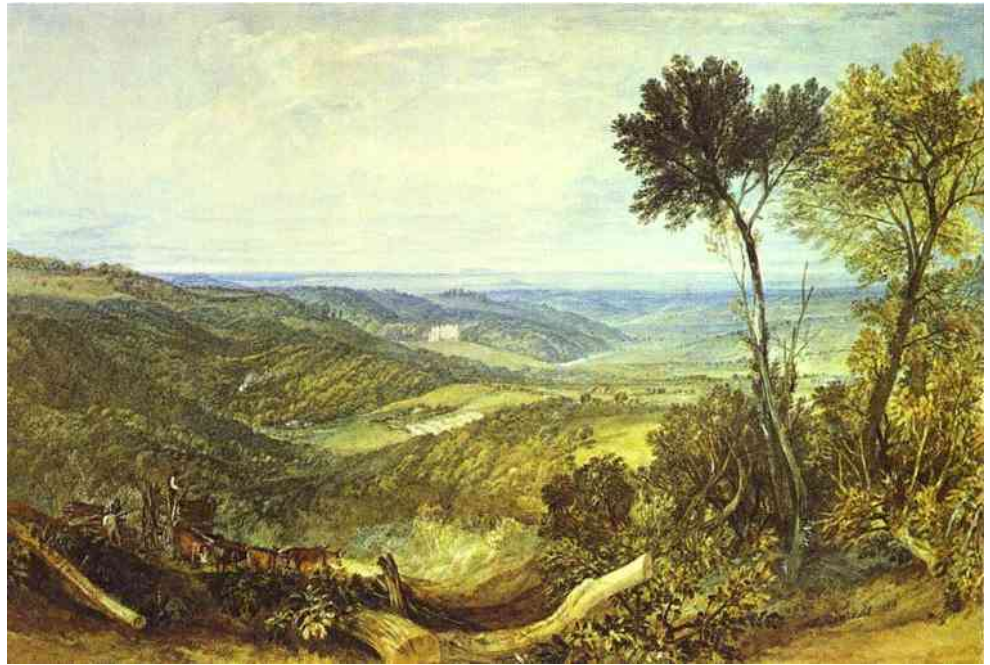
## Language and the Picturesque

- As Neo-classicism became more entrenched in the eighteenth century, poems about nature were subject to the same rules of composition that applied to poems about moral themes, important persons, and historical events.
- The focus of good Classical poetry—lofty subjects—required Poetic Diction


## 18<sup>th</sup>-century nature-poets and works:


- Alexander Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 1713
- John Dyer, *Grongar Hill*, 1726
- James Thomson, *The Seasons*, 1730
- William Collins, *Odes*, 1746
- Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard*, 1751
- William Cowper, *The Task*, 1785





- Paintings by J.M.W. Turner

- 
- The Picturesque developed partly from the old idea of the Ideal Landscape, an artistic counterpart of Virgilian pastoral poetry.
  - The Picturesque signified a shift from Neoclassicism to Romanticism, and mediated between the Beautiful and the Sublime.

- 
- the Picturesque acted as the mediator between Neoclassical and Romantic because it focused on nature, but remained “controlled.”
  - The Picturesque aimed to create the perfect picture, one “well-composed... with suitably varied and harmonized form, colors, and lights.” (Hugh Blair)
  - It did not embrace spontaneity or intensity as Romanticism did. Rather, the Picturesque adhered to standards that made a scene aesthetically appealing; it looked at constraints and formed its own ideals of art.

- 
- The Picturesque influenced many areas beyond art and writing, including architecture and landscape design.

# Key Person: William Gilpin (1724-1804)

- From Cumbria, United Kingdom, the county containing the Lake District.
- William Gilpin's ideas of aesthetic theory formed early notions of the Picturesque movement and helped in its development.
- Gilpin focused mainly on visual art, as he was a painter
- and writer, and he considered the Picturesque as
- “expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which
- is agreeable in a picture.”
- He formed a clear idea of what made a scene Picturesque: the qualities of rough texture, irregular lines, sharp contrast, intricate detail, and variegated colors.



- 1869 engraving of Gilpin by unknown artist

# WYE VALLEY

- The Wye Valley was the historical border between England and Wales.
- The Wye is a narrow river, maybe a few hundred yards across at most points. It meanders by hills through fertile valleys. Its main attraction is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Cistercian ruin in the village of Tintern.




# TINTERN ABBEY

- *William Wordsworth penned a poem about Tintern Abbey as part of his collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads.*




Gilpin's  
“Picturesque” view  
of Tintern Abbey



William Wordsworth first came to the Wye Valley as a Picturesque tourist, solo, in 1793.

His poem, written in 1798, starts out with a remembrance of his visit from five years before.

- 
- \* This 1798 visit included his sister Dorothy, also a creative writer. His poem “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” is a chronicle of his changes as a man and a poet in the intervening five years.



*Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* text

*“Tintern Abbey” is memory—specifically, childhood memories of communion with natural beauty.*

*The subject is very important in Wordsworth’s work, reappearing in poems as late as the “Intimations of Immortality” ode.*

*It established his reputation as the Poet of Nature.*

# J.M.W. TURNER

- Joseph Mallord William Turner was an English Romantic landscape painter, watercolorist and printmaker. Although renowned for his oil paintings, Turner is also one of the greatest masters of British watercolor landscape painting. He is commonly known as "the painter of light" and his work is regarded as a Romantic preface to Impressionism.
- Turner had a long career with a Picturesque phase in his early years. He also visited Tintern Abbey:



- What makes this “Picturesque”?
- Uplifting, powerful “sublime” arches
- A “ruin”, a once-great human achievement in decline
- The presence of Nature in the grass and shrubbery taking over
- A smooth, “beautiful” lawn.
- The smallness of human presence—dwarfed, if not overwhelmed.
- The rugged piles of stone refuse
- The subdued colors



Edward Dayes, *Tintern Abbey from across the Wye*, 1794, Cat. no. 69

# Dr. Snyder's Tour of the Wye Valley

October 2016



Chepstow, Wales. This is a village adjacent to the Wye River. It's where tourists lodged and bought equipment for hiking back in the day. It is about the size of Ligonier, but the town rises steeply above the river banks.



Chepstow is a medieval town with stone gates.



Chepstow has a castle, and some artist got super clever with twigs 😊  
You can find such sculptures around many English castles. Tourist bait.



Tintern Abbey



Tintern Abbey meets the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The language is Welsh.



The building is truly Sublime. Now, to be honest, I don't know whether that's because I can bring my knowledge about Wordsworth and the history about the abbey to enhance the visit, but it's a great example of how actually being there makes a huge difference. It is Awesome in the literal sense.









The Wye River Valley. It very much resembles the Juniata River in Pennsylvania, near Lewistown.







The Wye River Walk. Had it totally to myself.



Llandogo, Wales: very close to the position where Wordsworth stopped to admire the prospect for his poem.



Inside Tintern Abbey: Yes, they just let you walk around 😊  
(well, for \$12)



Inside Tintern Abbey



The inside is about twice the size of our Basilica.



Just because  
you're  
touring, that  
doesn't mean  
you let tea  
time go by





This one's for your generation. Downtown Chepstow.



# OTHER TOURS OF NOTE

➤ [North Wales](#)

➤ [Highlands Tour](#)

# How and why tourism ended

- \* Democratization started to spread across Europe. Monarchies and aristocracies, while still strong, were not the only show in town.
- \* The French Revolution cut England off from Italy and the Alps. People stayed home and toured their own countries.
- \* The Picturesque was an important addition to seeing landscape as other than either Sublime or Beautiful.
- \* The Industrial Revolution changed Europe forever. Cities had industrial sections which detracted from the clean and pleasant cultural districts.
- \* As part of the Industrial Revolution, railroads made fast easy transport possible. People no longer stopped and smelled the roses.