

Harry Potter and the Wizarding Voyage

Margaret-Ann Simonetta

ANTH E-1062: Selling Paradise: Tourism and its Objects

Dr. Zoe Eddy

December 20, 2020

“Is that where...?” whispered Professor McGonagall.
“Yes,” said Dumbledore. “He’ll have that scar forever.”
“Couldn’t you do something about it, Dumbledore?”
“Even if I could, I wouldn’t. Scars come in handy.
I have one above my left knee that is a
perfect map of the London Underground.”
- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*

In 2017, J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series reached a literary milestone second to the Bible, selling over 500 million series copies and becoming the world’s second-best-selling book and fastest-selling series of all time (Wizarding World, Bloomsbury). First published in 1997, the novels have become a fantastical escape for readers of all ages, as the series chronicles an adolescent boy’s newly discovered wizarding abilities, alongside his trials and triumphs of being the most famed wizard ever to be born. Thus, “The boy who lived” (Rowling, 1997) has grown into the globe’s most sought-after experience; cerebrally and physically. While the fandom has the freedom to crack open their choice between one of seven novels, they also have the opportunity to travel to unique worldwide destinations when seeking the ultimate Potter experience. As a result of *Harry Potter*’s dual literary and on-screen success, personal imaginations are individually illuminated from these vessels, empowering fans to employ liminal spaces situated throughout the United Kingdom as threshold crossings between the Muggle and Wizarding realm. Prominent United Kingdom pilgrimage sites have developed over the last two decades, ranging from London’s infinite *Harry Potter* filming locations and unequaled wizarding exposure to Scotland’s Jacobite Steam Train which continues to cross the famous viaduct used for the Hogwarts Express. Therefore, the Potter fandom has turned commonplace settings into

reimagined landscapes which may be used for fans across the globe to experience the *Harry Potter* series in a way that intensifies one's five-senses and creates a cultural milieu specific to the series itself. Above all, the *Harry Potter* series and its famous locations have developed into high-traffic destinations for fans to inhale their wildest wizarding wondrous while dually creating a one-of-a-kind tourist buzz for the United Kingdom; forever altering the local landscape. Because of this phenomenon, Potter enthusiasts from across the globe have evolved into wizarding voyagers — positively improving tourism throughout the United Kingdom and giving the series yet another unique achievement: a journey to Hogwarts and beyond!

Harry Potter enthusiasts are privy to the worldly whereabouts of Potter experiences which span nearly every continent to some degree. The United States offers adventures such as the first *Harry Potter* theme park (Universal Studios Wizarding World of *Harry Potter* - Hogsmeade) and the hit Broadway play, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. Castelobrujo, one of eleven worldly wizarding schools, is “In Brazil, hidden deep within the rainforest,” according to J. K. Rowling; offering South American witches and wizards the opportunity to travel and forage the outskirts of Brazil in the hopes of finding this magical location for a popular photo-op (Wizarding World, 2020). In 2014, the country of Japan quickly followed Pottermania suit and opened its first magical hotspot in Osaka, unveiling the world's second Wizarding World of *Harry Potter* for excited Eastern fanbases to rally in the wizarding fun.

Yet, the full *Harry Potter* experience lies directly where the pages began — the United Kingdom. After *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* film debuted in 2001, the conception of Potter-themed tourism genuinely stunned the minds of Britain's Tourism Chiefs, as seemingly

overnight the United Kingdom's allure went from Royal watching to wizard crossing. In November of 2001, Seren Welch, tourism campaign manager for the British Tourist Authority, held a *Harry Potter* tourism press conference as the BTA shared their optimism that overseas travel would 'slightly increase' due to the initial book and film series success. Welch went on to say, "Just as the movie is a tale of discovery, we hope that people will want to come to Britain to discover its magic," (BBC News UK, 2001). Indeed, this was the United Kingdom's first taste of Pottermania, as fans from across the UK eagerly surged to locations such as London, Oxford, and Gloucester for a chance to live their passions from fantasy to reality. According to BTA travel records, UK tourism severely lacked toward the latter of 2001, predominately due to September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. However, BTA spokesman Elliot Frisby suggested the first *Harry Potter* film gave Britain a unique opportunity to elevate travel back to the United Kingdom. Frisby went on to say this favorable overseas tourist attraction merits more than just a 2001 tourism increase, as he ended the press conference by stating, "By the end of [2001] there is unlikely to be a country in the world that hasn't heard of Harry Potter," (BBC News UK, 2001).

Thus, thereupon *Harry Potter's* inception, exuberant fans have evolved into inquisitive tourists who are craving an authentic Potter experience in the birthplace of J. K. Rowling's unparalleled tales. Tourists, by definition, inhabit a place or space which is foreign in comparison to their everyday lives. Concerning *Harry Potter* tourism, the stakes become even higher as travelers are dually occupying a liminal space while inhaling an experience that is wrapped in fiction. Although these hyper-focused fans (turned tourists) have strict visual narrations within their minds, their ability to transform a liminal expanse and reimagine it within their powers of

thought is one reason why the *Harry Potter* fandom is unlike any other tourist community. Regardless of the location itself is real within our physical realm, the ideals surrounding the space are based on fictional happenings. Due to this phenomenon, it's solely up to the traveler to recall such visualizations from the series and bring them to life in these areas; all while reinventing the *Harry Potter* series and giving the overall experience a new heartbeat. As Albus Dumbledore once vocalized, "Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" (Rowling, 2007). For this reason, the voyager destinations scattered throughout the United Kingdom offer Potter groupies unmatched encounters in comparison to its otherworldly competitors.

Notably, a majority of Potter devotees begin their travels along Britain's famous 'Potter Trail,' a legitimate *Harry Potter* map of Britain and its essential sites from the novels and films. Created by the British Tourist Authority, these hugely trafficked centerpiece sites include Northumberland's Alnwick Castle (where Harry and his fellow

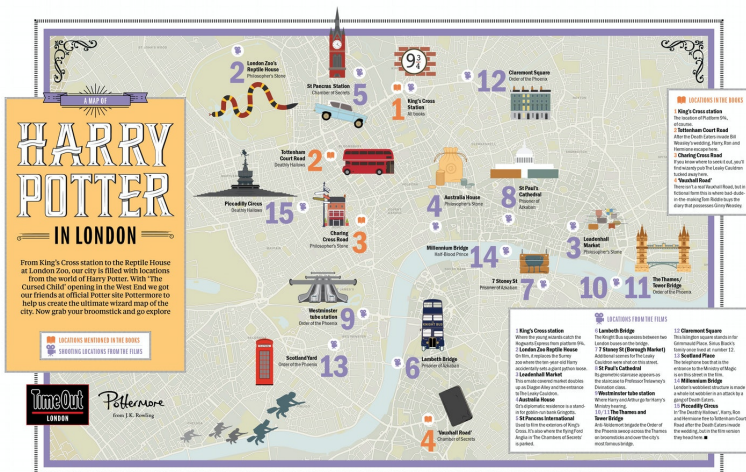


Figure 1. Pottermore. 2016. Harry Potter in London Map.

classmates learned to fly broomsticks in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*), Oxford's Bodleian Library (used as Hogwarts' regularly visited infirmary within the films), and Durham Cathedral (cinematically captured as Hogwarts throughout all eight *Harry Potter* movies). Whilst the BTA intended its Potter Trail to be popular among UK fans, the map was swiftly distributed worldwide with "special emphasis on North

America, Australia, South Africa, and Europe,” (Portman, 2001). Indeed, the BTA and local economy welcomed the extreme boost of tourism, thus circulating the map globally for further traction. Jo Leslie of the BTA noted the success of the film generated “huge interest in *Harry Potter*,” as she went on to say, “we [the BTA] intend to capitalize on that,” (Portman, 2001). Indeed, the UK did capitalize on Pottermania as local businesses along the Potter Trail saw an instantaneous increase in tourism and revenue beginning in 2002. Furthermore, additional operations decided to jump on the *Harry Potter* bandwagon and fashion their own tours for excited wizards; one being offered for \$45.00 (USD) per ticket by Visit Britain whose website boasts, “Go on a Wizards Bus Tour of London and explore the muggle capital city of the UK,” (Visit Britain, 2020). While tours like such may be easier and more accessible to your average Potter fan, more often than not, ultra *Harry Potter* aficionados will seize the map themselves and take advantage of the many free self-guided Potter Trail tours offered for locals or visiting tourists.

Specific to the city of London, Warner Brothers Studio Tour London - The Making of *Harry Potter*, is the most authentic and sought after Potter experience to date. Situated at the Leavesden stage where all eight films were produced, *Harry Potter* travelers have the greatest behind-the-scenes cinematic exposure; including, but not limited to, the original sets, costumes, and props to interact with. The Studio’s website offers tantalizing pre-experience photographs and videos for fans to connect with before their tour, as they advertise these special pieces were perfectly preserved so “Harry Potter fans could experience the magic of filmmaking first-hand,” (Warner Bros Studio Tour, 2020). Indeed, crazed Potter fans from across the globe seek this highly curated experience to ultimately feel closest to the series through these material items.

What sets this encounter apart from the rest is its exposure to fan-favorites, such as the Great Hall, the Forbidden Forest, and the genuine Hogwarts Express locomotive. Prior to the museum's grand opening, fans merely daydreamed of having contact with these cultural icons; however, now they may view these sights and replace their on-screen memories with physical imaginations. Moreover, curious wizards have exclusive realistic journey's throughout the Art Department (which holds the "jewel in the crown" Hogwarts Castle model) and wicked Creature Effects, such as the infamous Basilisk and the "three life-size" animatronic Buckbeak the Hippogriff. According to the Studio's website, three

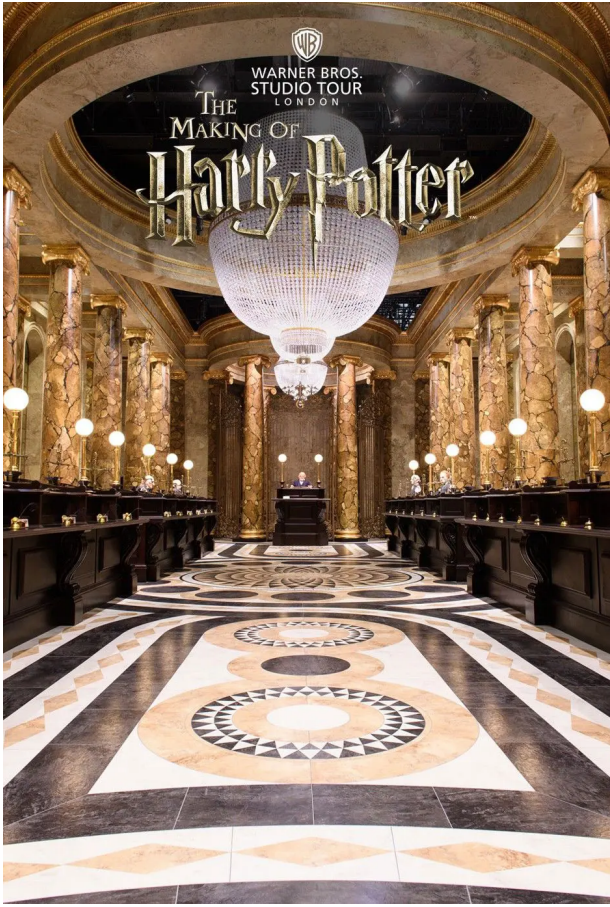


Figure 2. *Wizarding World. The Making of Harry Potter*. 2020.

versions were constructed for multiple filming angles (one angle standing tall, the second from a side-view, and the third laying down) (Warner Bros Studio Tour, 2020).

When in fact *The Making of Harry Potter* studio tour is by far the most expansive and intricate Potter experience created thus far, excited witches and wizards should also be wary of how much money they're spending on the Honeydukes Express trolley cart! London's Universal's tour will set an adult (16+) back \$57.12 per ticket (USD), which excludes the innumerable other offerings within the studio (Warner Bros Studio Tour, 2020). Beginning with frothy butterbeer and delectable treats from the multiple restaurants, to the three separate studio

shops offering premier souvenirs, and lastly, ‘enhanced’ options for visitors (one which includes a green screen experience on a broomstick with your wizard’s robe). A simple swig of Veritaserum would permit any drinker to say that *The Making of Harry Potter* is not an economical affair, yet, it is *the* experience; a juxtaposition many *Harry Potter* travelers find themselves in. While being a Potter fan has its remarkable moments, the tariff of being a Potter fan occasionally outweighs the magic. Nowadays, it’s accessible to find the books or films and live through the original fantasies, but still, the market price of being a wizard creates multiple tourist cultures encompassing the series — those who can afford these exclusive experiences, and those who cannot.

Be that as it may, Scotland reigns supreme to the most noteworthy of *Harry Potter* adventures — a 43 mile Jacobite Steam Train which choo-choos its way across the famous Glenfinnan Viaduct. This world-famous overpass has made a special appearance in every Potter film, however, its greatest appearance was in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Dubbed,

“The Flying Car Scene,” Harry and Ron use a magical 1966 Ford Anglia 105E (also known as the ‘Flying Car,’ according to the UK’s National Motor Museum) to follow the Hogwarts Express to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry because they missed the train’s strict 11:00 AM departure time (National Motor Museum Trust, 2020).



Figure 3. Travel and Leisure. 2019.

Although this scene is a high comical point within the film, the cinematography displays the

brehtaking views of the Glenfinnan Viaduct as the Hogwarts Express locomotive follows its crescent-shaped arches toward their magical destination. Visit Scotland's official website hosts a tourists-to-do list that spans four days worth of local experiences; day 3 being solely dedicated to *Harry Potter* and entitled "All Aboard The Hogwarts Express," (Visit Scotland, 2020). "Witness the sweeping cinematic scenery straight out of the eight blockbuster films," the website reads, as it goes on to tell travelers to "book the steam train in advance, as it is a very popular experience," (Visit Scotland, 2020). The term 'popular' concerning *Harry Potter* tourist attractions seems to be the most fitting way of describing such events, as the company who runs the Jacobite steam train, West Coast Railways UK, has profited greatly from this specific route. Operating 7 days a week with two daily routes, the 2021 fare prices have been set at \$55.95 (USD) per Standard ticket for a ride that lasts less than two hours. Nevertheless, this highly unique experience offers Potter fanatics a dual adventure; the ability to cross the same route the actors once did while filming these beloved movies, and at the same time, obtaining stunning photographs to vaunt their special Potter train ride once the journey concludes.

Tourist retail academic and author Kristen K. Swanson discusses the dimensions of tourist behavior in a 2004 article (*Tourists' and Retailers' Perceptions of Souvenirs*), detailing the innumerable structures of tourist perceptions with regard to souvenirs. Although the term 'souvenir' habitually sparks material memories for the common, souvenirs can be a form "of sacredness," or escapades "to remind the [tourist] of the experience" — a sensation typically associated with *Harry Potter* travelers (pg. 363). Considering *Harry Potter* tourism is solely based upon the spiritual connection uniting the reader or viewer with such fantastical sensations, these one-of-a-kind experiences become mental souvenirs for Potter wanderers. Yet, there are

two ends of the tourist spectrum, as Swanson contests, “From the retailer perspective, the desired merchandise mix must satisfy preferences of the target market while also being financially productive for the retailer, (pg. 364). When in fact the tourist is being provided a service (many times blinding *Harry Potter* fans from the truth surrounding their experience versus their wallet), they’re also providing big corporations and local businesses with a tremendous amount of annual revenue. Thus, spawning a major capitalized Potter market. Bluntly, it didn’t take long for the tourist industry to catch-on to this invaluable market-space, as Potter fans repeatedly buy more as the industry continues to produce more. Though the souvenir and experience trade may be well-versed in this field of marketable themes, *Harry Potter* enthusiasts do not seem phased by this mixture of industry capitalization and unique adventures. Because of this, the travel industry’s pendulum continues to swing from gathering endless revenue to giving the people what they want.

Withal, this form of money versus matter does bring into question the authenticity of Potter tourism and how well it aligns with the fantasies engrained within the minds of the fandom. As stated above, the three Potter-centric attractions mentioned in this piece are equally authentic to a certain degree, yet, not everyone is allowed these ‘authentic tours’ when discussing personal monetary concerns. Swanson and Dallen (2012) argue on behalf of this important juxtaposition and go on to say, “Authenticity creates the paradox between preservation of cultural traditions and community values, and the recognition for commercialization to generate income,” (pg. 491). There is no denying the *Harry Potter* fandom holds J. K. Rowling’s imaginations to the highest degree; a theme which has generated decades of fan-based traditions and moral values. This author would go as far as to say that the *Harry Potter* series has provided

its global community with life-lessons some may use throughout their existence, many of which can be useful when traveling to these worldly locations with the hope to relive the series to a certain degree.

That being said, there's a difference, for example, between the free version of the Potter Trail and the expensive Warner Brothers Studio Tour London - The Making of *Harry Potter*. Aside from the obvious fiscal variances, the level of lived-experience and authentic visual representations are incomparable when one considers the extreme behind-the-scenes exposure given to the fans at The Making of *Harry Potter* versus the Potter Trail filming locations. Along the Potter Trail, *Harry Potter* tourists are indeed stepping foot on the very ground the actors once retold the tale, however, visitors are forced to actively imagine the scenes from the films and reinvent them in their field of vision within the moment. Whereas during one's expensive venture at The Making of *Harry Potter*, the visualizations from the series are brought to life employing Warner Bros.; creating an effortless experience for the fandom. Unfortunately, in the realm of *Harry Potter*, money talks, and moreover, money allows *access*. Owing to that fact, it's difficult to proclaim if these Potter-centric tourist adventures are authentic due to these concerns. This lack of genuineness, to a certain degree, directly goes against Swanson and Dallen's argument based upon cultural traditions and community values within the tourist space. Furthermore, this author argues that while these experiences may offer fans once-in-a-lifetime exposure to J. K. Rowling's wizarding world, it is hardly an authentic experience if all fans are not allowed to join the party.

To conclude, the *Harry Potter* series has forever engrained itself in the United Kingdom's tourism and popular culture industry. Since its humble (and comically shocking) beginnings in 2001, the United Kingdom has been flooded with curious witches and wizards; all of who hope their Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry acceptance letter arrives one day soon. But, until that fateful day arrives, the fandom is left with stunningly beautiful sites, sounds, and architecture to feed their enthusiasm. From the original roots of the Potter Trail to the extremely sought-after Warner Bros. Studio Tour, and lastly, the famed Hogwarts Express Jacobite Stream train, *Harry Potter* fans are truly privileged with an abundance of wizarding experiences (some of the best being centrally located around J. K. Rowling's home-base). While it's safe to presume the global admiration for the *Harry Potter* series isn't fading anytime soon, it's equally important to presume that the tourist industry will continue to churn out new and exciting adventures for Potter fans to happily indulge in. Although a bulk of these experiences may not be inclusive for all, the series itself will always be an embracing space for those to return to at their leisure, regardless of their age or worldly cultural identity. Whether fans are reading from the original pages of the books, rewatching all eight feature films, or traveling worldwide to live through the wizarding realm, the *Harry Potter* series and its global success have branded themselves in the minds of our global economy and tourist industries. Because of this truly unique phenomenon, the *Harry Potter* fanbase has evermore reformed a sector of the tourist fabrication; allowing witches and wizards to take full advantage of the series's roots in the United Kingdom and branch their unparalleled attachment across all cultural and environmental dimensions.

References

BBC News. 2001, November 19. *Harry Potter to weave tourism magic*. BBC United Kingdom.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1664005.stm>.

Experience Oxfordshire. Retrieved on 2020, December 18. *Oxford Harry Potter*. Experience

Oxfordshire UK. <https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/oxford-harry-potter/>.

Find Your Great in Britain. Retrieved on 2020, December 9. *Top Harry Potter film Locations*.

Visit Britain. <https://www.visitbritain.com/us/en/top-harry-potter-film-locations>.

Lee, C. (2012). 'Have Magic, Will Travel': Tourism and Harry Potter's United (Magical)

Kingdom. *Tourist Studies*, 12(1), 52-69.

National Motor Museum. Retrieved on 2020, December 11. *Ford Anglia 105E 'Flying Car.'* The

National Motor Museum Trust United Kingdom. <https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/vehicle-collection/ford-anglia-105e-flying-car/>.

Portman, J. (2001). British tourism awaits magical boost from Potter: Gloucester Cathedral is

one of many sites featured on 'Potter Map of Britain. *Record* (Sherbrooke), pp. *Record* (Sherbrooke), 2001-09-28.

Romano, A. 2019, June 05. *Harry Potter Fans Can Tour the Scottish Countryside on a Real life*

Hogwarts Express. Travel and Leisure. <https://www.travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/harry-potter-hogwarts-express-train-tour-scotland-countryside>.

Rowling, J. K. (2007). *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Rowling, J. (1997). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Swanson, Kristen K, & Timothy, Dallen J. (2012). Souvenirs: Icons of meaning, commercialization and commoditization. *Tourism Management* (1982), 33(3), 489-499.

Swanson, K. K. (2004). Tourists' and retailers' perceptions of souvenirs. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(4), 363-377.

Time Out London Editors. 2016, July 5. *This magical map shows all the Harry Potter locations in London*. TimeOut. <https://www.timeout.com/london/blog/this-magical-map-shows-all-the-harry-potter-locations-in-london-070816>.

The Making of Harry Potter. Retrieved on 2020, December 15. *Discover The Magic of Filmmaking*. Warner Bros. Studio Tour UK. <https://www.wbstudiotour.co.uk>.

Visit Scotland. Retrieved on 2020, December 14. *Harry Potter Film and Book Locations Itinerary*. Visit Scotland, Arts and Culture. <https://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/attractions/tv-film/harry-potter-itinerary/>.

Warner Bros. Studio Tour London. Retrieved on 2020, December 12. *The Making of Harry Potter*. Wizarding World. <https://www.wizardingworld.com/discover/experiences/warner-bros-studio-tour-london-the-making-of-harry-potter>.