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# LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

Or Notes on Travel

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15 NOV 2011: Some travellers are born to love music, some achieve an appreciation of music over the course of their travels, while others have music thrust upon them - and then just can't get the tunes out their heads.



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The Doobie Brothers had it right when they suggested that we “listen to the music”. But beyond the idea of “a song”, the idea of “the music” is one of those niche markets, both hidden and ‘out there’, as a definite motivation for travel.

At this moment in time I am sitting in the Dora Keogh pub in downtown Toronto, totally infatuated with the impromptu Irish music band that is playing wonderful tunes as if they’d been playing together for years. Shades of Galway!

There are four fiddle players, two flute players, one Irish bagpiper and, without the usual tambourine-style Irish drum (the bodhran) this evening, all the musicians are tapping their feet in metronomic syncopation, and it sounds just wonderful. This symphony of mellifluous talent is drawing the audience into what traditional folk music is all about. The mystic chords of history and culture; the unique blends and mergers of lineages that stretch back thousands of years; and the sweet strains of auditory memories is exactly

what brings travellers like me, to wax enthusiastic about Ireland and Irish music.

But it could be Cuban or Israeli or Peruvian or Mongolian or Touareg or the music of 150 other peoples. It is hard to believe that music can be such a big draw for travellers

I recall a wonderful evening in Lafayette, Louisiana, listening and dancing to Cajun music that I had originally heard in a different format several thousand miles away.

When I was a tour guide in Quebec City way back when, we would relax in the evening at Le Gaulois restaurant, not far from the Chateau Frontenac Hotel, and amidst glasses of biere en fut, we would listen to that captivating, mesmerizing music.

There was an elderly woman who arrived nightly and when the intoxication of the music started to overwhelm, she started step-dancing in the aisles between the tables. The patrons would have the same reaction every night. First the snickers, then the snide remarks about the state of mind of the step-dancer and then, out of nowhere, another person would get up and start to step-dance until the crowd was caught up in the rhythm and the joy of the traditional folk music, along with their desire to participate and become 'one' with the music and the musicians. (Listen to any album by the group Le Reve du Diable to get an idea of the music that was typically featured at Le Gaulois).

Now, I remarked earlier that in my present environment at the Dora Keogh pub, it was "shades of Galway". Galway is about a one hour train ride west of Dublin. It's a lovely historic town

with amazing seafood, lots of shopping, imaginative strolling along the historic streets, and incomparable 'trad' (short for traditional) music in the evenings.

After a few days of squeezing into the front door of the music pubs and encountering a wall of enthusiastic (but un-budging) ale drinkers, all vying for the best position as close to the musicians as possible, we discovered the rear-door VIP entrance and learned to emulate the chess-like maneuvers of the locals to end up right in front of the musicians and remain there for hours, quaffing, talking, laughing, listening and building up that powerful relationship with the music and the destination.

There might be an a cappella solo singer or he/she might have a guitar as they mournfully crooned ballads about the Black Velvet Band or Dirty Old Town.

Or there could, just like now in the Dora Keogh, be flutists and fiddlers and pipers harmoniously and enthusiastically playing reels or jigs. Whereas we once thought the crowd was comprised of rough, tough locals, it turned out to be, after a few drinks and conversations, a gathering of smiling, sensitive, passionate music lovers who asked if they could refill your glass, or offered to share their crisps with you!


Creating a musical magnet to attract your clients to destinations is as easy as playing soft music in your work place or including some recorded music in a slide show or Power Point presentation or even having snippets of music on your website to accompany blurbs about your featured destinations. Your goal is to enliven their senses by

surrounding them with the sounds and feel for travelling to a locale; of wrapping their minds around the destination.

And of course, when it comes to selling, promoting and enthusing about a destination, we can all play the role of amateur musicologist.

Probably 25 years ago, I started to collect records, then tapes and then CD's of music in every country that I visited. When I think back to my favourite destinations, I hearken back to the music that I enjoyed so much, and that keeps drawing my mind back to the country and tugging at my memories with the plea to return one day and enjoy it in person all over again. Isn't this how you would like your clients to feel?

And my own music background? Well when I was growing up, my Mom set aside every Sunday morning to clean the apartment. To help her get through the task, she played her favourite tunes. Sometimes Broadway musicals such as Oklahoma or South Pacific; sometimes energetic and bouncy music from Latin America, a la Xavier Cugat, and sometimes it was her absolute favourite singer, Frank Sinatra. After years of having all this music ingrained in the deep recesses of my brain, it's no wonder that music has been such an influence in my life and my travels. Music can open up worlds within worlds of destination enjoyment and attraction and create beautiful travel memories.

The Doobie Brothers' lyrics said it best 

What the people need  
Is a way to make them smile  
It ain't so hard to do if you know how  
Gotta get a message/Get it on through

◆.oh oh listen to the music◆.



Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

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