GALWAD

VR HOLIDAYS

COULD VIRTUAL REALITY BE THE BEST WAY TO SEE PLANET EARTH WITHOUT COSTING THE EARTH?

Background information

Approximately 8% of the world's total carbon emissions are from tourism. Carbon emissions come from accommodation, flights, transportation and other facilities required to sustain tourists. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic it was estimated that the demand for flights would triple between 2020 and 2050 with increasing numbers of people jetting off to visit different parts of the world.

Tourism is a growing sector in the global economy and with that comes challenges for local infrastructure, communities, and the environment. Efforts are being made by the tourism industry to promote and encourage green travel, with environmental award schemes, interrailing, regenerative tourism and eco-friendly accommodation all growing in popularity in recent years. However, as the number of travellers worldwide grows, we can expect the impact on our environment to increase too and the answer may lie in new technology.

Virtual Reality (VR) technology has been around since the mid-1950s, however it's everyday use in education, socialising and as a tool for seeing and understanding the world has only taken off in the last decade, when the technology became available commercially. By wearing a VR headset you can immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of another world, whether real or fantasy, and in some cases even interact with objects and people.

Take a look at this article on VR tourism (theguardian.com) to find out more about its growth during the pandemic. Could new and emerging technology be the solution to green tourism? Is Virtual Reality the best economical and environmentally friendly way of seeing the world in the future?

Activity

Imagine visiting the Pyramids of Egypt, kayaking in the Antarctic and camping out in the Amazonian rainforest all in a day? This is all now possible using Virtual Reality (VR) software/headsets which can transport you somewhere completely different, without taking a single flight. Your challenge as a class is to debate the following:

Virtual Reality (VR) technology is the best way of seeing planet Earth without costing the Earth.

- Split your class into groups, and ask half of the groups to talk in support of the motion and half of the groups to speak against the motion.

- Provide time for each group to brainstorm ideas and gather as many facts as possible. They can use the 'things to consider sheet' (below) to help with their research.

- Each group should organise their ideas and use 6/7 of their points to create and prepare a speech.

- Deliver the speeches to the class.

- Discuss the points debated as a class and decide as a class what place technology may have in the future.

Extension activity
Set up a virtual reality travel agency, how will you promote virtual reality travel to your customers? What VR trips would you offer?

Curriculum links

Purposes	- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. - Enterprising, creative contributors
AOLEs and What matters statements	**Humanities** - Informed, self-aware citizens engage with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity and are able to take considered and ethical action. **Science and Technology** - Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human action.

Global Goals

Goal 7: Affordable & Clean Energy

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption & Production

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities

Things to consider

People travel to see, taste and try new things, for good weather and to spend time with family/friends.

Tourism creates thousands of jobs for local people but tourism jobs can often be low paid and seasonal meaning local people can't find work all year round.

Over-tourism is a problem seen by popular tourist destination who have an influx of visitors. It can have a negative impact on the lives of those who live there. It puts pressure on facilities, public transport and resources such as energy and water.

Some people worry that VR is expensive or are afraid of feeling sick/isolated when using it.

Tourism can put pressure on local land use and can cause loss of natural habitats

8% of the worlds carbon emissions are from tourism, and demand is likely to increase across the world in the next decade. Flights, accommodation and other facilities needed for tourists all contribute to these carbon emissions.

Virtual reality technology is widely available and developing all the time, 4% of households (2020) have access to VR equipment, this figure is higher amongst young people under 35.

Holiday costs for families are expensive It's estimated that an average spend of £2417 for a family holiday.

By 2030, a 25% increase in CO_2-emissions from tourism compared to 2016 is expected. from 1,597 million tons to 1,998 million tons.

Regenerative Tourism (leaving a place better than it was before you arrived) is gaining in popularity and may be a sustainable alternative.

Hydrogen planes are now being trialled so would produce zero carbon emissions.

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