



Exercise 3

Read the article about virtual online tours offered by many museums, and then complete the notes.

Virtual museum tours!

'Visiting' a museum online – Melissa Jackson learns more about the planning behind an online tour

For some people, a visit to a large city isn't complete without a trip to an important museum. And now, with the advances in technology that we see happening around us, many of these institutions are providing online tours to show off their precious items. For people who log on to explore what's on offer, the fact that there's no need to wait in a queue to see a famous painting or important object is a real plus! Often, when you are inside a museum, it's almost guaranteed that when you get to the room where a well-known painting or item is located, it's so crowded that you feel that everyone is in the same room as you. However, if you're exploring the museum via the internet, no-one blocks your view.

Creating a successful online tour isn't always easy, as I discovered when I spoke to Alex Bartoni, an experienced designer of virtual tours. He explained that above all it's vital to think carefully about the target audience. Is the museum hoping to attract academic people researching detailed information, or is it aiming for a younger audience needing to complete a homework project? Nowadays, many museums offer different online tours which are suitable for a range of interests. One tour might focus purely on clothing from South America from hundreds of years ago, another on modern-day glassware and yet another on the development of Japanese anime – it depends on the museum.

Whatever the reason behind people's decision to take a virtual tour, it is essential to ensure that all the information is accurate, Alex pointed out. If it is not, it could have a very negative effect on the museum's reputation and on the user experience. He continued, 'Even simple things such as viewing a sculpture online can be improved by making sure you take photographs of an item from all sides.'

I asked Alex what is important in terms of how information is presented on a virtual tour, and I discovered that it's important to avoid having too many details on the screen. This is because many people can become discouraged when faced with too much written information at once, and won't continue with the tour. Some people prefer listening to information rather than reading it, so taking the time to add audio descriptions of objects is worthwhile and will be very helpful, explained Alex.

Having been on several virtual tours of museums myself, and while researching this article, I've realised that another really popular feature is that you are able to access links to extra information about objects you're interested in.

If you've never thought about trying a virtual museum tour before, maybe now's the time!



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Question 9

Advice given by a designer of virtual tours:

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[Total: 7]

