
The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism

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Contents

8 Monastic Hospitality

8.1 The Origins of Western Monasticism	3
8.2 The rule of Benedict and rise of Western monastic hospitality	4
8.3 Basis for religious hospitality	10
8.4 The legacy of mediaeval monasticism	11
8.5 Summary of the principles of hospitality	16
Index	19



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Monastic Hospitality

At the end of Classical Antiquity the Roman Empire fell and Europe entered a period of decline; at the same time the sophisticated network of commercial hospitality that had been established fell into disuse. For the considerably fewer people that needed to travel, the monasteries filled the vacuum that had been left. In contemporary literature, for example *Acta Ionannis*, the few remaining contemporaneous commercial establishments had a reputation for bedbugs, discomfort, violence and danger; these only existed in the towns and there was no provision in the countryside or along roads.

This chapter explores the Western European monastery traditions of the Middle Ages, starting with the Rule of Benedict, who was writing in about AD 500. Benedict's Rule is analysed and the chapter identifies how, during the 1000 years of mediaeval times up to the beginning of the Renaissance, the monastic traditions were affected at the time and subsequently. The chapter concludes with an identification of the principles of hospitality that had been established by the traditions of western monasticism.

8.1 The Origins of Western Monasticism

The teachings of the New Testament provide the basis for the western monastic tradition. There are also parallels to be found in early Buddhist and Hindu writings, and it is known that there was considerable contact between India and Alexandria, which was, at that time (c. AD 200), the principal commercial and intellectual centre in the Mediterranean. Hindu merchants had formed a permanent and prosperous colony in Alexandria (Clement, *The Stromata* 1.71). Other forms of monasticism such as the Syrian and strictly Oriental monasticism, were to have no direct influence on that of Europe.

The growth of Christian asceticism (self-denying way of life) coincided with the last of the great Roman persecutions of Christians to take place in Egypt; when many Christians fled from the cities to avoid martyrdom. The followers of St Anthony were purely eremitical (Christian hermit-like), whilst those who followed the Rule of St Pachomius more nearly approached

Chapter extract

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