

After Dark: Atmospheres, Temporalities, and Embodied Practices of Nighttime Tourism

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This special issue foregrounds **the night** as a central analytical lens in tourism geographies. Tourism studies have traditionally privileged daylight practices, leaving afterdark experiences underexplored. Yet,

the night increasingly hosts a wide range of touristic and cultural activities, from light art festivals and open-air concerts to night markets, gastronomic trails, religious vigils, night diving, night safaris, and stargazing events. These nighttime experiences intersect with processes of urban regeneration, aesthetic commodification, seasonality management, and the production of both distinctive affective atmospheres and rhythm-making of tourism destinations. By focusing on the night, this issue contributes to recent calls for greater attention to **temporalities**, **atmospheres**, and **embodied practices** in tourism research. It highlights how nocturnal cultural production reshapes tourist imaginaries, mobilities, and policies, offering a novel contribution to tourism geographies. Importantly, this issue opens the door to exploring the full range of **night-related tourism forms**—including but not limited to:

- **Cultural tourism** (e.g., nighttime museum openings, live music events, theatre);
- **Creative tourism** (e.g., participatory performances, artistic interventions after dark);
- **Gastronomic tourism** (e.g., food trails, night markets, culinary festivals, wine festivals);
- **Event-based tourism** (e.g., light festivals, music festivals, film nights);
- **Religious and spiritual tourism** (e.g., pilgrimages, vigils, nocturnal ceremonies);
- **LGBTQI+ tourism** (e.g., queer nightlife, raves, safe spaces);
- **Wellness tourism** (e.g., thermal baths, full-moon yoga, nocturnal meditation);
- **Nightlife, night clubbing and party tourism** (e.g., clubbing, beach parties, festival circuits);
- **Astrotourism and stargazing** (e.g., visits to observatories, dark-sky reserves, celestial events such as northern lights).
- **Night diving** (e.g., underwater exploration events at night, such as in the Red Sea in Egypt).
- **Night safaris** (e.g., visits to wildlife reserves during the night especially to see more nocturnal animal activity, such as in the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania).

These practices unfold across many **urban, coastal, insular, rural and mountain tourism destinations**, offering an ideal terrain for transnational, comparative, critical, and interdisciplinary reflection on the multiple and multidimensional relationships between tourism and the night.



Over the past decade, nighttime leisure economy has become crucial for tourism-oriented place branding strategies at both local and regional scales, ranging from large cities and their metropolitan areas, coastal tourism destinations, insular destinations, and even some snow tourism towns across the globe. Beyond the worldwide circuit of night clubbing destinations, astrotourism, nocturnal religious/neo-ancestral rituals, night diving and night safaris (especially in African/Asian postcolonial tourism destinations) have emerged as new tourism assets through the development of nocturnal tourism activities.

Tourism geographers have addressed nighttime tourism in a range of ways. Crucially, nighttime tourism has emerged as a significant focus of geographical inquiry, shaped by interdisciplinary engagements with urban change, mobility, emotion, and aesthetic capitalism. One of the most evident themes is the way in which nightlife and tourism reshape the social and spatial fabric of cities. Nofre et al. (2018), in their study of La Barceloneta, revealed how the intensification of tourism and nightlife placed pressure on local infrastructures and residents, generating tensions around liveability. Similarly, Tomasella (2023) explored the fragmented mobilities and immobilities that define the nightly experience in Venice, exposing frictions between heritage conservation, tourism economies, and everyday life. These studies illustrate how nighttime tourism can reinforce spatial inequalities while producing contested urban rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004; Edensor, 2010).

Night governance has become a critical framework to address these tensions. Seijas and Gelders (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of nighttime governance mechanisms, showing the global diffusion of policies designed to manage, promote, and commodify the urban night. Yet, as Roberts (2006) already observed, the expansion of the nighttime economy often turns central urban spaces into 'no-go' zones for vulnerable populations, highlighting the ambivalence of policy

interventions. These dynamics have become even more visible in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought nightlife economies to a standstill and underscored their precarity (Aramayona, 2025).

At the core of many urban strategies lies the aestheticization of the night. Light festivals have been positioned as both cultural attractors and policy tools. Giordano and Ong (2017) examined the mobility of these policies and their capacity to frame cities as creative and desirable, while García-Ruiz (2024b) explored their emotional dimensions, especially in relation to diasporic affect in installations such as *Mi-e Dor De Tine*. His ethnographic analysis of light festivals in Portugal, García-Ruiz (2024a), offers rare empirical depth into how these events mediate cultural and touristic agendas, reinforce emotional narratives, and shape urban imaginaries. These studies resonate with broader critiques of aesthetic capitalism (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2015) and the enrichment economy (Boltanski & Esquerre, 2020), where the cultural value of the night is mobilized as an asset for tourism development.

The affective and embodied experience of night tourism has also received increasing attention. Bissell's (2010) work on affective atmospheres in public transport has informed studies of how individuals navigate the city at night, encountering both enchantment and vulnerability. Building on these approaches, Shaw (2018) and Dunn (2016) have called for a reevaluation of the nocturnal city as a distinct epistemological and experiential field—one marked by altered perceptions, temporalities, and socialities. The *Affect Theory Reader* (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) has been foundational for understanding how nightscapes are produced not only through infrastructures and policies but also through bodies, emotions, and collective sensations. These perspectives converge in recent critical syntheses. García-Ruiz and Nofre (2024), in their volume *Understanding Nighttime Tourism*, have argued that the night must be understood as a terrain of aesthetic, political, and economic negotiation. Their work

complements Straw's (2014) observations on waste and spectacle in nocturnal settings, showing how nighttime tourism reorganizes what is visible, valuable, and permissible in the city. Moreover, the simultaneous processes of gentrification and touristification—exemplified in Lavapiés (Mazorra-Rodríguez et al., 2024)—illustrate how the night becomes a temporal frontier for real estate valorization and social displacement. In turn, fantasy and enchantment also play a role in shaping nighttime tourism geographies. Lovell and Sharma (2023) analyzed “fairy tourism” as a form of magical spatial production, where stories and imaginaries construct destinations as immersive experiences. These findings underscore the growing importance of emotion and narrative in destination marketing and night tourism planning, especially in cities where tourism becomes inseparable from fantasy (Smith, 2009). Yet, as Gössling and Scott (2025) warn, the future of tourism is increasingly uncertain in a context of global polycrisis, where overdependence on aesthetic and experiential strategies may prove unsustainable.

Finally, geographical research on nighttime tourism has moved beyond celebratory accounts of creativity and vibrancy. It now offers a critical lens into how the night is governed, experienced, and commodified. Drawing from rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004), urban political economy (Zukin, 1995), affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), and tourism geography (Giordano & Ong, 2017; Nofre et al., 2018), this body of work provides a robust foundation for analyzing the complexities of nocturnal urban life in the twenty-first century.

Development of Key Concept

This special issue builds upon such work by expanding the discussion on **tourism and the night** to include a wider array of cultural, economic, spatial, environmental, sensory and affective-emotional dimensions. In doing so, this special issue seeks to consolidate the emerging field of **nighttime tourism geographies**, offering a platform for theoretical

innovation and empirically grounded insights into how tourism reshapes the night—and how the night reshapes tourism. In this sense, key theoretical frameworks for this issue include:

Nocturnal Imaginaries Tourism at night is shaped by cultural imaginaries of glamour, danger, pleasure, or mystique. These imaginaries, as theorized by Will Straw (2014), frame urban nightscapes as desirable destinations while encoding classed, gendered, and racialized meanings that guide how tourists see and move through space.

Aesthetic Capitalism

The night has become a curated and commodified visual experience. Drawing on Lipovetsky and Serroy (2013), Boltanski and Esquerre (2020), and Zukin (1995), this concept explores how lighting, design, and atmosphere are packaged for tourist consumption—often reinforcing spatial inequality, environmental stress, and exclusionary redevelopment (García-Ruiz, 2023).

Rhythmic Tourism

Tourism after dark follows and produces new temporalities—seasonal, nightly, and cyclical. Based on Lefebvre's rhythm analysis (2004) and Edensor's (2010) work on performance and festivity, this concept highlights how festivals, rituals, and night markets reorganize tourist flows and urban rhythms.

Touristification

Touristification refers to the socio-spatial transformation of neighborhoods, landscapes, and public space by tourism dynamics. Jordi Nofre et al. (2017, 2020) have demonstrated how nightlife-related touristification in Southern Europe produces displacement, resident–visitor conflict, and symbolic rebranding—especially in historic and working-class areas.

Affective Atmospheres

Tourists engage with the night through multisensory and emotional encounters. Building on Bissell (2010) and Gregg & Seigworth (2010), this concept considers how sound, lighting, crowd movement, and darkness generate atmospheres of awe, intimacy, nostalgia, or anxiety that shape place attachment and memory (García-Ruiz, 2024).

Night Governance

Tourism after dark raises distinct regulatory challenges—from licensing and noise control to mobility and safety. Drawing on Roberts (2006) and Seijas (2020), and extended by Nofre's research on night-time urban policy, this concept critically assesses how governance models shape access, exclusion, and conflict in night-time tourism destinations.

Political Ecologies of the Night

Night-time tourism impacts urban and rural ecologies through energy use, artificial illumination, and environmental disruption. As argued by Robert Shaw (2018), tourism geographies must account for the ecological politics of the night, including the tension between illuminated spectacle and dark-sky protection.

Nocturnal Methodologies

Studying tourism at night requires methodological adaptation. Low light, shifting atmospheres, and ethical concerns challenge conventional research tools. García-Ruiz (2024) and many other researchers advocate for mixed methods—including ethnography, visual analysis, and sound mapping—to capture the ephemeral, affective, and contested nature of nocturnal tourism. This issue aims to interconnect these concepts to offer a transdisciplinary understanding of how the night becomes a contested, curated, and lived touristic space.

Methodology

The overall methodological approach for this special issue is positioned in a context of important methodological advances in tourism studies characterized by a consolidated interdisciplinarity, the use of new research techniques (especially digital and sensory) and the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques (mixed methods). In addition, this special issue opens the door to action-research methodologies and articles based on the promotion of the quadruple helix as a tool for innovation in tourism, as key tools for the achievement of environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and egalitarian, and economically competitive and resilient night-time tourism destinations as response to the current tourism polycrisis on a global scale (Gössling & Scott, 2025). Therefore, our special issue welcomes contributions based on diverse and rigorous methodological approaches, including but not limited to:

- **Qualitative ethnographies** of nighttime events or spaces (e.g., light festivals, clubbing circuits, stargazing communities);
- **Urban, environmental, and policy analysis**, including studies of dark-sky tourism governance, light pollution, and night-time planning;
- **Mixed methods**, combining interviews, observation, surveys, statistical analysis and discourse/media analysis;
- **Spatial Big Data Analysis & Advanced GIScience** applied to tourist flows, illumination patterns, and environmental nightscapes;
- **Comparative research** between different geographical, cultural, social and political settings;
- **Visual and sensory ethnography**, particularly to study affective atmospheres, soundscapes, nocturnal streetlighting, and embodied nighttime experiences.

We encourage researchers to address the **specific challenges of studying tourism after dark**, including issues of access, perception, safety, and the use of digital tools in low-light conditions.

Guidelines & Timeline

We anticipate including a range of paper types, including Research Articles, Commentaries, and State-of-the-Art Review Papers (for more details on paper types & guidelines: <https://www.tgjournal.com/notes-for-authors.html>).

To align with the editorial timelines of *Tourism Geographies* and ensure a smooth peer review and production process, we propose the following schedule for the special issue:

- **Call for Papers Launch:** June 2025
- **Abstract Submission Deadline:** November 15, 2025
- **Notification of Abstract Acceptance:** December 15, 2025
- **Full Paper Submission Deadline:** March 15, 2026
- **Peer Review Period:** March – August 2026
- **Revised Papers Due:** September 2026
- **Online First Publication:** As papers are accepted, starting October 2026
- **Final Special Issue Publication:** Late 2026 or early 2027

This timeline is designed to accommodate authors participating in the 6th International Conference on Night Studies (**October 2025**) while respecting the journal's production requirements.



Target Audience

This special issue is aimed especially at researchers in tourism studies (both those at the start of their careers and those in established positions) who may be interested in exploring and/or deepening their knowledge of the multifaceted nocturnal dimension of tourism destinations as well as of the tourism phenomenon at local, regional, and global level. Our special issue is also intended to call for an active and sustained engagement of the scholarly community in the environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and collaborative design, planning, development, management and governance of night-time tourism destinations (urban, coastal, island,

rural and mountain) in the global north, global south and global east. In this sense, the interdisciplinary collection of manuscripts of our special issue will be of interest for scholars belonging to a wide spectrum of scholarly fields such as tourism studies, leisure studies, urban studies, regional studies, environmental studies as well as of specific academic disciplines such as urban geography, cultural geography, urban sociology, sociology of tourism, sociology of leisure, social and cultural anthropology, urban anthropology, arts and performance studies, media and communication studies, architecture and planning, ecology and biology – among others.

Guest Editor Bios

Manuel García-Ruiz holds a PhD in Sociology from the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa and is an Associate Researcher at CIES-Iscte in Lisbon, Portugal. His work critically explores socio-spatial transformations driven by culture-led events, particularly at night, critically examining how eventification and touristification reshape emotional and spatial relations in urban contexts. His research addresses nighttime economies, festivals, tourism, city branding, artwashing, and artistic careers. Dr. García-Ruiz employs a strong mixed-methods approach, combining ethnography, visual analysis, and quantitative tools to investigate the affective, symbolic, and political dimensions of urban nightscapes. He has held visiting professorships and served as a scientific advisor for multiple institutions and projects. He has published extensively in tourism studies, cultural sociology, and experiential economies, with a particular focus on Night Studies. He has recently edited *Understanding Nighttime Tourism* (Edward Elgar, 2024), a landmark volume that brings together global perspectives on the role of night in urban tourism and cultural policy. He is also the founder and coordinator of the International Night Studies Network (INSN), fieldwork coordinator at LXNIGHTS, and coordinator of the Rede de Etnografia Urbana (Etno.Urb).

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Jordi Nofre holds a PhD in Human Geography and currently is Senior Researcher at the Interdisciplinary Center of Social Sciences at NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal. His research focuses on the interplay between nightlife, tourism and urban change in Southern Europe. Dr Nofre applies a multidisciplinary approach grounded in ethnography, spatial analysis, and critical urban theory. His work has contributed significantly to debates on night-time leisure mobilities, festivalization, and the political economy of tourism. He has published extensively in the fields of geography, cultural studies, and urban sociology. With a total of 2,397 citations in Scholar Google's, Nofre has published a total of 116 academic works at the time of writing.

Nofre is Co-Editor of *Understanding Night-time Tourism* (Edward Elgar, 2024), Co-Editor of *Nocturnal Cities: Past, Present and Futures* (Special Issue in Forum Sociológico, 2023), CoEditor of *Exploring Iberoamerican Youth Street Cultures in the 21st* (Springer, 2021), and Editor of *Exploring Nightlife: Space, Society and Governance* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Nofre is founder and coordinator of LXNIGHTS Research Group, an international team of scholars working on the geographies of the nocturnal city, and co-founder of the International Night Studies Network. Nofre is member of the Editorial Board of World Leisure Journal, and Principal Investigator in Portugal of NOMADIC Staff Exchange Project (2025-2028: ID: 101183165). Dr Nofre is regular reviewer of many Q1 journals such as: Nature – Human and Social Sciences Communications; Cities; Urban Geography; Annals of Leisure Research; Journal of Urban Affairs; Current Issues in Tourism; Tourism Geographies; Leisure Studies; Journal of Sustainable Tourism; Social and Cultural Geography; Journal of Urban Management; City, Culture & Society, among others.

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