The Grand Tour

Sources from the Beinecke Library, the Paul Mellon Centre, the Chaney Library, the British Library and other selected sources
The Grand Tour was a rite-of-passage for many aristocratic and wealthy young men of the eighteenth century: a phenomenon which shaped the creative and intellectual sensibilities of some of the eighteenth century’s greatest artists, writers and thinkers. These accounts of the English abroad, c.1550-1850, highlight the influence of continental travel on British art, architecture, urban planning, literature and philosophy.

This collection of manuscript, visual and printed works allows scholars to compare a range of sources on the history of travel for the first time, including many from private or neglected collections. We include letters; diaries and journals; account books; printed guidebooks; published travel writing; paintings and sketches; architectural drawings and maps.

The Grand Tour is a wonderful source of information about daily life in the eighteenth century, highlighting such everyday issues as transportation, money, communications, food and drink, health and sex.

The material also covers European political and religious life, British diplomacy; life at court, and social customs on the Continent, and is an invaluable resource for the study of Europe’s urban spaces.

There is a wealth of detail about cities such as Paris, Rome, Florence and Geneva, including written accounts and visual representations of street life, architecture and urban planning.

Primary Materials

Manuscripts of many prominent figures, including Sir William Hamilton, Sir Thomas Hoby, Richard Lassels, Sir Philip Sidney, John Evelyn, Charles Burney and Joseph Spence are featured. We also include a good number of accounts from female travellers, including Lady Hester Stanhope and Elizabeth Craven.

We include many rare and essential printed sources, including travel accounts, guide books, histories and accounts of religious and political life. Authors include Henry Swinburne, Mariana Starke, J. Fenimore Cooper, Tobias Smollett and Henry Matthews.

Visual material is a great strength of the resource, and we include a large number of paintings and sketches of Italy and the Continent, as well as portraits of Grand Tourists, by artists including: JMW Turner, Pompeo Batoni, Richard Wilson, William Pars, Thomas Rowlandson and Joseph Wright of Derby.
These primary materials are supplemented by excellent secondary sources to aid students with research:

- A searchable, full-text version of John Ingamell’s landmark Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701-1800. This remarkable work identifies over 6000 individual Grand Tourists, providing biographies and details of their tours. It also functions as a database of Grand Tour manuscripts not included in the resource.

- A selection of digitised source material from the Brinsley Ford Archive at the Paul Mellon Centre, London. This incomparable research collection contains the notes, clippings and research gathered by Sir Brinsley Ford, from which John Ingamells compiled the Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701-1800.

- An indexed collection of hundreds of quality, modern photographs of Italy, providing a detailed visual source of all the historical sites, palaces and streets visited by tourists, to accompany the written accounts.

- Exclusive essays by leading scholars from Art History, History, and Urban Studies perspectives, contextualising the Grand Tour and interpreting sources.

This collection is drawn from libraries, archives and record offices throughout the UK and the world, including:

- Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University
- Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
- British Institute, Florence
- British Library
- Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies
- Cornwall Record Office
- Durham University
- Library of Professor Edward Chaney
- Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art
- Surrey History Centre
- University of Southampton
- West Yorkshire Archive
- Yale Center for British Art

Additional Sources

These primary materials are supplemented by excellent secondary sources to aid students with research:

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Our editorial board includes:

Professor Jeremy Black, University of Exeter
Professor Edward Chaney, Southampton Solent University
Professor Rosemary Sweet, University of Leicester
Dr Emma Winter, Columbia University
“This collection of primary and secondary sources on the history of the Grand Tour has no rivals in terms of its completeness or accessibility. It is based on a survey of all the major international archives and libraries and is thus a must for all institutions that deal with any aspect of cultural history or the humanities.”

Professor Edward Chaney, Southampton Solent University