

POINT OF VIEW

A place from which one can observe a large, scenic panorama or a special part of the landscape. We distinguish natural viewpoints (e.g. hills, escarpments and slopes) and artificial viewpoints (e.g. towers and viewing platforms).

The history of viewpoints dates back to antiquity, when the cities were located on the highest parts of the hills (mainly Hellenistic centres such as Pergamon or Lindos). At the end of the 18th century in England, and then throughout Europe and America, there was a development of landscape tourism, focused on *the picturesque tours*. Tourists used natural points of view – hills, mountains and peaks. In the nineteenth century, the Alps were a particularly popular destination for tourists and artists (painters or poets), fostering admiration for the picturesqueness and beauty of the mountain landscape. In Urry's concept, the viewpoint is an integral part of the tourist attraction, focused on consumer tourism, where the decisive character is the gaze.

The point of view is an important element of ornamental gardens, where it is subordinated to the main visual axis, open to a vast panorama. Here, the viewing point was most often the windows of the palace. They play a special role in landscape parks, often marked with a bench in specially selected places from which one can admire the designed fragment of the landscape. Viewpoints are placed on the route of the walk through a park in such a way that it appears as a "picture gallery" revealing subsequent views-images during the walk.

The development of means of transport, first by rail and then by car, has created a mobile way of observing the world. Urry defines this kind of perception as *spectatorial gaze*, which consists in a transient recording of passing views, most often from the windows of a car, bus or train.

Artificial points of view are created on tourist trails or in areas attractive for tourists. Towers and platforms have an unquestionable impact on the landscape, either as an interesting complement to the natural landscape (e.g. at the top of a hill), or by disturbing the aesthetics or landscape of a given place. Viewpoints can also be architectural elements: church towers, towers of the town hall or radio and television towers.

One of the most famous lookout towers in the world is the Eiffel Tower from 1889. It offers a unique view of the urban landscape of Paris. The building is also an architectural landmark and a symbol of the French metropolis. A copy of the Eiffel Tower is the Blackpool Tower from 1894. This edifice allows to observe two completely different landscapes: urban and natural (in this case – maritime). The highest artificial viewpoint in Poland is located on the 49th floor of Sky Tower in Wrocław.

In Polish legislation, the definition of a viewing point is contained in the Environmental Protection Act.

[M. K., B. F.]

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