

Scan & Stroll

Five steps for creating engaging, self-guided visitor experiences using QR Codes and Social Media

By Rachel Glover (STEM Consulting)

QR codes can transform everyday tourism touchpoints into opportunities for visitors to discover stories, explore new places, interact with content, and connect with local businesses and communities.

Whether you're creating a single interactive stop at your business or a community-wide walking tour, this five-step framework will help you design an experience that is purposeful, engaging, and easy to navigate.

1. WHO – Understand Your Visitors

Who are you creating this experience for?

Consider:

- Who are your primary visitors (families, couples, independent travellers, groups, or other audiences)?
- What are their interests, motivations, and expectations?
- How much time are they likely to spend engaging with the experience?
- What languages, accessibility needs, or technology limitations should you consider?
- What would make this experience relevant, enjoyable, or useful to them?

Remember: Different visitors engage in different ways. Design an experience that reflects the people you want to reach.

2. WHY – Define Your Purpose

What do you want the experience to achieve?

Consider both the visitor experience and your business or community goals.

For visitors:

- Discover something new or unexpected.
- Connect with local history, culture, nature, or people.
- Enjoy a fun, memorable, or educational activity.
- Explore independently and at their own pace.

For your business or community:

- Increase engagement and encourage longer visits.
- Showcase products, services, or experiences.
- Encourage bookings, purchases, or return visits.
- Promote local businesses and community attractions.
- Build awareness, connections, and positive visitor experiences.

Remember: The best QR experiences provide value to visitors while supporting a clear business or community objective.

3. WHERE – Identify the Right Touchpoints

Where and when will visitors encounter the QR code?

Consider:

- Where do visitors naturally stop, explore, wait, or become curious?
- Which locations have interesting stories or opportunities for interaction?
- Is the QR code easy to see, reach, and scan?
- Is the location safe, accessible, and appropriate for visitors to pause?
- Will visitors have reliable internet or cellular connectivity?
- If designing multiple stops, is there a logical and enjoyable route?

Remember: Place QR codes where they add value to an existing visitor journey, rather than expecting visitors to go out of their way to find them

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4. WHAT – Create the Experience

What will visitors discover or do when they scan?

Think beyond providing information. Consider how you can create an experience that sparks curiosity and encourages participation.

Choose your content:

- Short videos or behind-the-scenes footage.
- Audio stories, interviews, or local perspectives.
- Historical photographs or before-and-after comparisons.
- Trivia, quizzes, scavenger hunts, or challenges.
- Interactive maps, guides, or recommendations.
- Social media activities or photo opportunities.

Use the three-part experience formula: *One Story + One Interaction + One Next Step*

- Story: What interesting, useful, or meaningful information will visitors discover?
- Interaction: How will they participate, reflect, explore, or engage?
- Next Step: What should they be encouraged to do afterward?

Remember: A meaningful interaction doesn't need to be complicated. A short story, a surprising fact, or a simple question can make an experience memorable.

5. NEXT – Encourage Continued Exploration

What happens after the visitor engages with your content?

Consider:

- Is there another stop or experience to explore?
- Can you introduce a nearby attraction, business, or community landmark?
- Would visitors benefit from directions, recommendations, or additional information?
- Is there an opportunity to encourage a booking, purchase, or future visit?
- Could you invite visitors to share their experience or provide feedback?
- How will you know whether the experience is achieving its purpose?

Remember: Every QR experience should have a thoughtful conclusion or next step. Make it easy for visitors to continue their journey.

Start Small. Build from There.

You don't need to develop an entire walking tour to get started. Begin with one location, one compelling story, one meaningful interaction, and one clear next step. Test the experience, gather feedback, make improvements, and expand when you're ready. The goal isn't simply to get visitors to scan a QR code. It's to give them a reason to be glad they did.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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