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Virtual Tours: How Museums Make Money While Closed



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Museum closures—whether due to renovations, seasonal downtime, limited hours, or unexpected disruptions—no longer have to mean lost revenue. In 2026, museums around the world are proving that physical access is no longer the only path to financial sustainability.

The shift is being driven by modern **Museum Software**, which enables museums to transform virtual tours from free marketing tools into profitable digital experiences. When powered by the right **Museum Software Solution**, virtual tours generate income, grow memberships, attract donors, and expand global reach—all while museum doors are closed.

This guide explains **how museums actually make money with virtual tours**, using a scalable **Museum Platform** designed for engagement, monetization, and long-term growth.

Why Virtual Tours Are No Longer Just “Nice to Have”

Virtual tours started as temporary substitutes. Today, they are permanent revenue channels. Museums now use virtual tours to:

- Reach global audiences
- Monetize digital access
- Support education and outreach
- Maintain engagement during closures
- Build new income streams independent of footfall

With the right **Museum Software Platform**, virtual tours are not a backup plan—they are a strategic asset.

The Biggest Myth About Virtual Tours

The most common misconception is that virtual tours must be free.

In reality, museums that successfully monetize virtual experiences understand one thing: **people pay for value, not just access.**

A robust **Museum Software Solution** allows museums to package virtual tours as:

- Premium experiences
- Educational programs
- Member-exclusive benefits
- Fundraising tools

Let's break down how this works in practice.

12 Ways Museums Monetize Virtual Tours While Closed

1. Ticketed Virtual Tours for Paid Access

One of the most direct monetization methods is **ticketed virtual tours**. Using a modern **Museum Software Platform**, museums can:

- Sell virtual tour tickets online

- Control access with secure links or logins
- Offer time-bound or on-demand viewing
- Bundle tours with talks or live sessions

Ticketed tours are especially successful for:

- Special exhibitions
- Curator-led walkthroughs
- Limited-time collections

This model mirrors physical ticketing—but without capacity constraints.

2. Live Guided Virtual Tours with Premium Pricing

Live interaction increases perceived value. With the right **Museum Software**, museums can host:

- Live curator-led tours
- Interactive Q&A sessions
- School or academic group walkthroughs

Live tours command higher pricing because they offer:

- Real-time interaction
- Expert storytelling
- Exclusivity

Many museums price live virtual tours higher than in-person tickets—without overhead costs.

3. Membership-Only Virtual Experiences

Virtual tours are powerful membership drivers. A connected **Museum Software Solution** allows museums to:

- Lock premium virtual tours behind membership access
- Offer early or exclusive digital exhibits
- Add virtual perks to existing memberships

This approach helps museums:

- Retain members during closures
- Justify membership value beyond physical visits
- Attract remote supporters

Virtual access turns memberships into **year-round value propositions**.

4. Educational Licensing for Schools & Institutions

Education is one of the most overlooked revenue opportunities in virtual touring. With a scalable **Museum Platform**, museums can:

- License virtual tours to schools
- Offer curriculum-aligned content
- Provide access to teachers and students remotely

Educational institutions are willing to pay for:

- Structured learning modules

- Reliable digital access
- Expert-created content

This model generates recurring revenue while advancing educational missions.

5. Fundraising Through Virtual Exhibits

Virtual tours don't just sell tickets—they inspire donations. When integrated with fundraising tools in **Museum Software**, virtual tours can:

- Highlight conservation efforts
- Tell donor impact stories
- Trigger donation prompts at key moments

Strategically placed donation calls within virtual tours consistently convert engaged viewers into contributors.

6. Corporate & Sponsored Virtual Tours

Brands want association with culture, education, and heritage. Using a flexible **Museum Software Platform**, museums can:

- Offer sponsored virtual tours
- Co-brand digital exhibits
- Create private corporate experiences

Sponsorship revenue from virtual experiences often continues even when physical sponsorship pauses.

7. Paid Access to Digital Collections

Virtual tours can be gateways—not endpoints. With **Museum Software**, museums can:

- Offer preview access through tours
- Upsell deep-dive digital collections
- Monetize high-resolution artifacts and archives

Researchers, educators, and enthusiasts often pay for structured digital access when it's well-presented and searchable.

8. On-Demand Content for Long-Term Revenue

Unlike physical visits, virtual content can be reused endlessly. A modern **Museum Software Solution** enables museums to:

- Record live tours for later access
- Create on-demand libraries
- Sell bundles or subscriptions

This creates passive income that continues long after the initial launch.

9. Global Reach Without Physical Constraints

Physical museums are limited by location. Virtual tours aren't. Using a cloud-based **Museum Platform**, museums reach:

- International audiences

- Diaspora communities
- Researchers and learners worldwide

Global reach increases demand—and monetization opportunities—far beyond local attendance.

10. Personalization Increases Willingness to Pay

People pay more when experiences feel personal. AI-powered **Museum Software** enables:

- Interest-based tour recommendations
- Personalized content paths
- Dynamic follow-ups after viewing

Personalization turns casual viewers into paying supporters.

11. Data-Driven Optimization of Virtual Revenue

Virtual tours provide something physical spaces often can't: **clean, actionable data**. A connected **Museum Software Platform** tracks:

- Viewer drop-off points
- Time spent on exhibits
- Conversion to tickets, memberships, or donations

Museums use this data to improve tours—and increase revenue continuously.

12. Virtual Tours as Marketing That Pays for Itself

Unlike traditional marketing, virtual tours can:

- Generate direct revenue
- Feed ticket sales for future visits
- Convert viewers into members

With the right **Museum Software Solution**, virtual tours aren't a cost—they're a profit center.

Common Mistakes Museums Make with Virtual Tours

Even good intentions fail without the right strategy. Common mistakes include:

- Offering everything for free
- Lacking clear calls to action
- Not integrating tours with memberships or fundraising
- Using disconnected tools for access and payment

Avoiding these mistakes is critical to making virtual tours financially sustainable.

What a Profitable Virtual Tour Strategy Looks Like

Museums that succeed have:

- Clear pricing models
- Integrated ticketing, memberships, and donations
- Strong storytelling and interactivity
- Reliable, scalable **Museum Software Platform**

Profitability comes from strategy—not just technology.

How NextBee Helps Museums Monetize Virtual Tours

[NextBee](#) provides a powerful **Museum Software Platform** that helps museums:

- Launch ticketed and member-exclusive virtual tours
- Host live and on-demand digital experiences
- Integrate fundraising and memberships seamlessly
- Personalize virtual journeys using AI
- Track revenue and engagement across all digital channels

With NextBee's **Museum Software Solution**, museums don't just survive closures—they continue to grow, engage, and generate revenue.

👉 **Ready to monetize virtual tours—whether doors are open or closed?**

[Book a personalized demo today](#) and see how NextBee's **Museum Software Platform** can help your museum make money through virtual tours.

Our Pledge to You



“Our relationship with you, our client is a strong partnership between our two companies. We bring to you years of best practices, a complete solution, our commitment, and unwavering dedication to your business’ success.”

Rohit Singh

VP of Customer Engagement

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