

Analyzing Blitar City's Historical Sites as an Open Laboratory for Educational Tourism–Based History Learning

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Abstrak: Pembelajaran sejarah dalam pendidikan formal masih cenderung bersifat tekstual dan kurang memberikan pengalaman belajar yang kontekstual, sehingga diperlukan pendekatan alternatif yang memanfaatkan lingkungan sebagai sumber belajar. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis potensi Kota Blitar sebagai laboratorium terbuka pembelajaran sejarah melalui pemanfaatan situs peninggalan sejarah lintas era, mulai dari masa Majapahit hingga era Bung Karno, serta mengkaji relevansinya sebagai destinasi wisata edukasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode observasi lapangan dan dokumentasi terhadap situs-situs sejarah di Kota Blitar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebaran situs sejarah yang berdekatan secara spasial dan berkesinambungan secara kronologis memungkinkan integrasi pembelajaran sejarah berbasis tempat (*place-based learning*) dengan wisata edukasi berbasis kawasan. Pemanfaatan situs-situs tersebut mampu mendukung pembelajaran sejarah yang kontekstual, reflektif, dan berorientasi pada pengalaman langsung. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Kota Blitar memiliki kapasitas historis dan edukatif yang kuat untuk dikembangkan sebagai model laboratorium terbuka pembelajaran sejarah. Implikasi penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual bagi pengembangan pembelajaran sejarah berbasis kota dan wisata edukasi berkelanjutan. Namun, penelitian ini masih terbatas pada analisis kualitatif observasional dan belum mengukur dampak implementatif terhadap hasil belajar peserta didik.

INTRODUCTION

History education occupies a strategic position within the education system, as it plays a crucial role in shaping historical consciousness, fostering an understanding of national identity, and developing students' ability to interpret the relationship between past events and contemporary social realities. Through history learning, students are expected not only to comprehend factual information and chronological sequences, but also to reflect upon the values, meanings, and lessons embedded in historical events for present-day life. However, in formal educational practice, history learning continues to face various challenges, particularly the dominance of narrative, textual, and textbook-oriented instructional approaches. This condition often results in one-way learning processes and provides limited opportunities for students to experience and interpret history in a contextual manner.

The heavy reliance on written learning resources has led history to be perceived primarily as a collection of facts, figures, and events to be memorized, rather than as a

lived experience of space and time that can be directly observed and explored within the surrounding environment. Consequently, history learning has been less effective in fostering students' emotional and intellectual connections with the past, resulting in weak historical consciousness. In fact, students' immediate environments frequently contain rich historical traces that are highly relevant to curricular content, including heritage sites, historical buildings, and urban spaces with significant historical value. This situation indicates an urgent need to develop history learning approaches that connect curricular materials with local historical realities through the utilization of environment-based learning resources.

Over the past decade, a growing body of research has demonstrated that the use of historical sites and museums as learning media and educational tourism destinations has a positive impact on history learning processes. Istiqomah & Sabardila (2023) revealed that the Patiayam Museum functions effectively as an educational tourism venue capable of enhancing students' interest and understanding of history through out-of-class learning experiences. Another study by Alfianto & Arsyad (2023) indicated that the Dinger Tomb site has potential as a local history learning resource based on outdoor learning, although the analysis was limited to a single site and a specific historical period. Meanwhile, Ridwanulloh et al. (2022) emphasized that educational tourism at Penataran Temple can strengthen students' multicultural values, particularly in understanding cultural diversity and local history; however, the study primarily focused on social values rather than the systematic development of history learning. Similarly, research by Ayu et al. (2025) showed that outdoor learning based on cultural heritage sites can enhance students' cultural literacy, yet it did not comprehensively link this approach to the development of educational tourism and cross-period history learning.

Despite their valuable contributions, existing studies on site-based history learning still exhibit several limitations. Most previous research tends to examine historical sites in isolation, whether within a single location, institution, or historical period. Moreover, educational studies often remain detached from the development of educational tourism, resulting in the utilization of historical sites being understood primarily as short-term visits or episodic learning experiences rather than as components of an integrated and sustainable learning system. Consequently, a research gap persists in the limited number of studies that conceptualize the city as a unified historical learning space that integrates multiple heritage sites across different historical periods into a cohesive learning landscape.

In response to this gap, the novelty of the present study lies in its integrative approach, which positions Blitar City as an open laboratory for history learning. Blitar City is conceptualized as a historical space that encompasses heritage sites from the Majapahit era to the Sukarno era, which are not isolated entities but interconnected within a shared learning network. This study does not merely view historical sites as tourism objects, but as pedagogical media that enable experiential, reflective, and contextual history learning. This approach expands the concepts of place-based learning and heritage education by incorporating a cross-period historical dimension and the deliberate integration of educational tourism aimed at achieving history learning objectives.

The contribution of this study to the development of knowledge lies in strengthening research on environment-based history learning while enriching the

discourse on educational tourism from the perspective of history education. By employing a field-based qualitative approach that emphasizes direct observation of historical sites, this study seeks to provide empirical insights into how the historical potential of an urban area can be utilized as an authentic learning resource that is relevant to the needs of the history curriculum and sustainable in nature. The objectives of this study are to analyze the potential of historical heritage sites in the City of Blitar as an open laboratory for history learning; to formulate a conceptual framework for their utilization as educational tourism destinations that support the enhancement of historical awareness, the preservation of cultural heritage, and meaningful history learning; and to examine the potential for developing area-based historical tourism destinations in the City of Blitar.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design to analyze the potential of historical heritage sites in Blitar City as an open laboratory for history learning and as educational tourism destinations. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to achieve an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon, particularly in interpreting the historical significance, educational value, and potential utilization of historical sites as environment-based learning resources. Qualitative research enables researchers to examine reality in its natural setting and to interpret phenomena based on empirical data obtained directly from the field, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument in the processes of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Within qualitative inquiry, reality is viewed as complex and context-dependent; therefore, the researcher plays a direct and central role as the main instrument in data collection and analysis (Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted in Blitar City, focusing on historical heritage sites that represent a long historical trajectory, ranging from the Majapahit Kingdom era to the period of struggle and leadership of Sukarno. The selection of research locations was based on historical and educational considerations, namely the presence of sites that are directly related to national and local history learning content. The researcher conducted direct field engagement to observe the physical conditions of the sites, the spatial organization of their surrounding environments, and the educational potential that can be developed within the context of locality-based history learning. Field observations were carried out systematically and repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the sites as authentic learning spaces, as recommended in field-based qualitative research (Yin, 2018).

The primary data collection techniques employed in this study consist of direct observation and documentation, without involving interviews with informants. The historical sites that were directly observed and documented include the Gedog Temple Site Area in Sananwetan, Blitar City; Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan; Pendopo Ronggo Hadinegoro Blitar; the Tomb of Adipati Aryo Blitar; Pesarean Pangeranan Gebang Blitar; Langgar Gantung An-Nur; Istana Gebang Blitar; the PETA Museum Monument in Blitar; the PETA Uprising Memorial of 14 February 1945; the Monument of the Training Site for Prospective Student Soldiers of TRIP in 1947; the Mas TRIP Monument of 1949; the Ngadirejo Battle Monument of 15 April 1949; the Bung Karno Library and Mausoleum Complex; the Samandiman Whip Monument;



the World Peace Gong Monument; and the Haji Syuhada' Monument. Observations were conducted through direct examination of site conditions, the availability and completeness of historical information, accessibility, and the potential for integrating the sites into learning activities and educational tourism programs. The observational data were recorded in detail in field notes and supported by visual documentation in the form of photographs and records of site conditions. Visual documentation is considered essential in qualitative research as it is able to represent the empirical condition of the research objects and to support a more accurate analytical process (Sugiyono, 2020). In addition, written documentation in the form of historical archives, site management reports, regional policy documents, and relevant academic literature was also utilized to enrich and validate the field findings.

Data obtained from observations and documentation were selected and classified according to the research focus, namely the potential of the sites as an open laboratory for history learning and as educational tourism destinations. The data analysis process was conducted continuously from the data collection stage through final interpretation, allowing the researcher to consistently refine meanings and identify relationships among findings. This analytical approach was applied to ensure that the research findings genuinely reflect empirical field conditions and are aligned with the study's conceptual framework. Data validity was ensured through the application of technique triangulation by comparing data derived from field observations with written and visual documentation. Triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the findings and to minimize researcher subjectivity in data interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Blitar City as an Open Laboratory for History Learning: Empirical Findings Based on Cross-Era Site Observations

Blitar City, as both an urban area and a cultural region in East Java, represents a historical space that preserves traces of civilization from various significant periods, ranging from the classical Hindu–Buddhist era, the development of Islam, colonialism, to the post-independence and postcolonial period. This diversity of historical heritage endows Blitar with considerable potential to function as an open laboratory for history learning, where students and the wider community can engage with history through direct interaction with space, artifacts, and historical landscapes. Conceptually, the notion of an open history laboratory positions historical sites as primary sources that enable learning processes to occur through field-based observation of material evidence, spatial–temporal stratification, local artifacts, and collective memory. This approach aligns with studies in history education that emphasize the utilization of historical sites in formal and nonformal learning as part of experience-based curricula (Umam, 2025). In this context, the historical sites of Blitar City may be understood as components of a “living curriculum space” that contextually integrates material evidence with historical narratives.

Early traces of classical civilization in the Blitar region are reflected in the presence of Gedog Temple, which indicates religious and cultural activities during the Hindu–Buddhist period. Several archaeological studies associate this temple with the distinctive brick architectural tradition of East Java that developed during the



Majapahit era. Findings in the form of brick structures, artifacts, and their geographical context reinforce Blitar's position as part of the East Javanese cultural landscape during the kingdom period, thereby granting Gedog Temple strategic value as a medium for pre-Islamic history learning grounded in archaeological evidence. Records of Gedog Temple date back to the early nineteenth century, when Thomas Stamford Raffles documented it in *The History of Java* as one of the significant remnants of Javanese kingdoms. However, between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the site suffered damage due to the extraction of building materials by local communities and colonial interests. Despite these challenges, through an interpretative approach, Gedog Temple can continue to be utilized as an entry point for sustainable classical history learning that is interconnected with other historical sites in Blitar City, while simultaneously fostering an understanding of the social and religious dynamics of East Javanese society since the medieval period.



Figure 1. The Gedog Temple Site Area, Sananwetan District, Blitar City

Entering the Islamic Mataram and colonial periods, Blitar City preserves various historical sites that reflect the socio-political dynamics of Java from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The presence of Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan, Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro, the Tomb of Adipati Aryo Blitar, Pasarean Pangeranan Gebang, Langgar Gantung An-Nur, and Istana Gebang represents the complex interactions between local elites, religious symbols, and colonial power structures. Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan, which is associated with indigenous bureaucrats during the Dutch East Indies period, illustrates the strategic position of the *priyayi* class within the colonial administrative system and the transformation of residential spaces into symbols of local historical identity. Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan is a historic structure associated with Patih Djojodigdo (R. Ng. Bawadiman Djojodigdo), who served as the patih of the Blitar Regency during the period 1877–1895. In the oral traditions of the Blitar community and surrounding areas, this site is also known as the “Hanging Tomb.” This designation arises from the visual configuration of Patih Djojodigdo's burial complex, which creates the impression of a suspended structure, although in factual terms the element that appears to be hanging is solely the protective superstructure, or tomb canopy (Ningtyas et al., 2015).



Figure 2. Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan

Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro, constructed around 1875 by Regent KPH Warsoekoesomo, functioned as the center of local government and the official residence of the regent. This Indische Empire-style building not only stands as a historical witness to colonial administration but also reflects changes in Blitar's urban layout following natural disasters caused by Mount Kelud. The presence of statues, inscriptions, and the monument commemorating National Hero Supriyadi within the pendopo complex further enhances the site's educational value. According to (Putro, 2024), in the city of Blitar, the regency hall (*pendopo kabupaten*) is spatially positioned on the northern side of the town square (*alun-alun*), oriented toward the open space, while its rear axis faces Mount Kelud. The spatial arrangement of the *alun-alun* is characterized by the presence of banyan trees planted as symbolic elements. This configuration reflects the urban planning principles associated with the Mataram Sultanate, which remain relatively well preserved in Blitar to the present day. The *alun-alun* continues to function as the primary public space in the form of a square-shaped open field that serves as a focal point for community activities and social interaction, with the banyan trees symbolizing protection and authority. In contrast to Blitar, in many other cities the traditional Mataram-style *alun-alun* has undergone substantial transformation; these open spaces are frequently redeveloped into urban parks, thereby diminishing the role of the open field as a core element of traditional urban structure.



Figure 3. Pendopo Ronggo Hadinegoro Blitar

The Tomb of Adipati Aryo Blitar, which has been designated as a cultural heritage site through the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 24 of 2001, serves as an important marker in the formation of local political identity, as the title *Aryo Blitar* refers to the dukes who governed the Blitar region since the pre-colonial period. Meanwhile, the Pasarean Pangeranan Gebang functions as a burial

complex for the governing elite of Blitar from the colonial era through the post-independence period, representing the continuity of Javanese aristocratic authority within both colonial and national administrative structures. Langgar Gantung An-Nur, located on Kemuning Street in Plosokerep, holds particular significance in the post-Java War context, as local tradition associates it with former soldiers of Prince Diponegoro who settled in Blitar as part of colonial policies aimed at suppressing potential resistance. The command of Diponegoro's militia forces in the Plosokerep area was led by Irodikoro, a figure who was part of Diponegoro's troops that moved toward the Brang Wetan region around 1828, approximately two years prior to the outbreak of the Java War. Irodikoro subsequently settled in the vicinity of Langgar Gantung, which is believed to be a legacy site associated with Diponegoro's visit to Blitar, and played a role in disseminating Islamic teachings among the local community (Husna & Afiyanto, 2022).



Figure 4. The Tomb of Adipati Aryo Blitar



Figure 5. Pesarean Pangeranan Gebang Blitar



Figure 6. Langgar Gantung An-Nur

During the period of the national movement and independence, Istana Gebang occupied a central position as the childhood home of Ir. Soekarno, which now functions as a history museum. This building, characterized by Indies-style architecture, serves as a witness to Bung Karno's early life prior to his involvement in the national movement. The presence of original artifacts belonging to the Soekarno family displayed in the museum helps visually and contextually represent the socio-cultural life of colonial and national elites in the early twentieth century. This historic building began to be occupied by the family of Bung Karno between 1917 and 1919 after it was acquired from a Dutch national (Putra & Budiwiyanto, 2018). Istana Gebang holds strategic significance in Indonesia's national history; consequently, the area was formally designated as a cultural heritage site as part of preservation policies aligned with the development of the tourism sector in the City of Blitar. This designation was legally enacted through the Decree of the Mayor of Blitar Number 188/33/HK/410.010/2011 concerning the Establishment of the Cultural Heritage Area of "Istana Gebang" as the basis for land acquisition by the Blitar City Government. Following the enforcement of this decree, administrative ownership of the Istana Gebang complex was officially transferred from the family of Ir. Soekarno to the Government of the City of Blitar at the end of 2011.



Figure 7. Istana Gebang Blitar

During the period of Japanese occupation through the phase of the physical revolution, the City of Blitar once again affirmed its role in Indonesia's national history through the PETA Uprising of 14 February 1945. This event is commemorated by the presence of the PETA Monument and the PETA Uprising Memorial, which symbolize the early armed resistance carried out by indigenous troops against Japanese rule. The narrative of struggle is further reinforced by various other historical remains, including the Training Site for Prospective Student Soldiers of TRIP in 1947, the Mas TRIP Monument of 1949, and the Ngadirejo Battle Monument (15 April 1949), which collectively reflect the active involvement of youth and students in defending Indonesian independence. The existence of these monuments underscores Blitar's position as a historical landscape of struggle with strategic value, both as a source of historical learning and as a destination for educational tourism. The large number of battle memorials established to commemorate the armed conflicts of the 1945–1949 physical revolution cannot be separated from Blitar's role as one of the strategic governmental locations in East Java, particularly when the capital of East Java Province was repeatedly relocated due to the intensifying wartime situation. This condition is consistent with the findings of (Romzy & Sapto, 2024), which indicate

that Blitar functioned as a temporary center of government in response to the dynamics of armed conflict during the revolutionary period.



Figure 8. PETA Museum Monument, Blitar



Figure 9. The Memorial Monument of the PETA Uprising of 14 February 1945 (The Pencil Monument)



Figure 10. The Monument of the Training Center for Prospective TRIP Student Soldiers (1947)



Figure 11. The Mas TRIP Monument (1949)



Figure 12. The Ngadirejo Battle Monument (15 April 1949)

In the post-independence era, the historical identity of Blitar City has been further strengthened through the Bung Karno Proclamator Library and the Bung Karno Tomb Complex, which together form an integrated landscape of nationalism-oriented education. Numerous studies indicate that these sites function not only as memorial spaces but also possess pedagogical value as sources for learning history, leadership, and national character. The presence of the Samandiman Whip Monument and the World Peace Gong further complements Blitar's historical narrative from the perspective of political culture and messages of global peace. In addition, to commemorate the deaths of prospective pilgrims from Blitar in the crash of a Martinair DC-8 aircraft in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1974, the Hajj Martyrs Monument and the Hajj Martyrs Mosque were constructed near the official residence of the Mayor of Blitar and the Kebonrojo area of Blitar City.



Figure 13. The Bung Karno Proclamator Library and Tomb Complex



Figure 14. The Samandiman Whip Monument



Figure 15. The World Peace Gong Monument



Figure 16. The Hajj Martyrs Monument

Overall, the distribution of historical sites in Blitar City demonstrates strong spatial and temporal continuity from the Majapahit period to the era of Bung Karno. The integration of these sites within a cross-era educational history tourism framework enables history learning to take place in a holistic, contextual, and locally grounded manner. Research in history education emphasizes that the utilization of local history as a learning resource can enhance students' historical consciousness, emotional engagement, and critical thinking skills regarding the nation's historical trajectory (Widiadi et al., 2024). Accordingly, Blitar City occupies a strategic position as an open history laboratory that supports the development of history education, educational tourism, and the preservation of the nation's collective memory.

Integrating Historical Sites and Educational Tourism: The Development of a Place-Based Learning Approach in History Education

Blitar City possesses historical characteristics that render it highly potential as an open laboratory for history learning, particularly due to the richness of cross-era heritage sites integrated within a single urban landscape. The presence of historical sites ranging from the Majapahit period to the era of Bung Karno demonstrates a strong spatial and temporal continuity that is rarely found within a single city. This condition enables history learning to take place in a contextual manner, allowing students to directly observe historical evidence, understand the dynamics of social change, and interpret past events in relation to contemporary living spaces. Thus, Blitar City functions not merely as a geographical setting, but as an active pedagogical medium in the history learning process.

The potential of Blitar City as an open laboratory for history learning is evident in its capacity to provide authentic place-based learning experiences. A place-based learning approach facilitates more inclusive and contextual learning, enabling students to develop both emotional and intellectual attachments to the places they study, thereby transforming history into a living and sustainable learning experience (Aji & Fahrudin, 2025). Historical heritage sites in Blitar, such as Gedog Temple, Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro, Istana Gebang, and the Bung Karno Tomb Complex, allow students to learn history through direct interaction with artifacts, buildings, and historical landscapes. Such interactions encourage students not only to receive information passively, but also to engage in observation, interpretation, and reflection on the historical meanings embedded within these spaces. History learning through this approach strengthens historical thinking skills, including the ability to understand context, continuity, and change across historical processes.

Another advantage of Blitar City as an open laboratory lies in the diversity of historical periods represented by its sites. Gedog Temple represents the early phase of Hindu-Buddhist civilization and the development of classical culture in East Java. Colonial-era sites such as Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan and Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro reflect the dynamics of colonial power, the role of local elites, and transformations in urban spatial organization. Furthermore, sites associated with the national movement and independence, including Istana Gebang, the PETA Monument, and various struggle memorials, present narratives of nationalism, resistance, and the formation of national identity. This diversity allows history learning to be presented in a comprehensive and continuous manner, enabling students to understand history as a long-term, interconnected process across different periods.



In addition to its educational value, Blitar City's potential also lies in its ability to integrate history learning with educational tourism. History-based educational tourism in Blitar is not merely oriented toward recreational visits, but can be developed as structured learning activities that support the objectives of history education. Through educational tourism, students and the wider community can learn history directly at the sites of historical events, making the learning experience more meaningful and memorable. Educational tourism is not solely interpreted as a recreational activity, but as a learning forum that enables learners to ask questions, observe, and engage deeply with historical heritage, thereby strengthening personal learning experiences (Ridwanulloh et al., 2022). The integration of learning and educational tourism also creates opportunities to enhance awareness of cultural heritage preservation, as historical sites are perceived not only as tourist attractions but as sources of knowledge and collective identity.

The development of Blitar City as an open laboratory for history learning also contributes to the formation of public historical consciousness. By utilizing urban spaces as learning media, history is no longer perceived as abstract content detached from everyday life, but as part of a living social reality that continues to be experienced and transmitted. Students are able to connect their learning experiences with their surrounding environment, making history more relevant and meaningful in shaping both personal and national identity. This process aligns with the objectives of history education, which emphasize not only knowledge acquisition but also the cultivation of attitudes and national values.

Overall, Blitar City holds strategic potential as an open laboratory for history learning that integrates cross-era heritage sites with place-based learning approaches and educational tourism. The richness of historical sites, strong spatial and temporal continuity, and opportunities to integrate learning with direct experience position Blitar as a contextual, reflective, and sustainable history learning space. The effective utilization of this potential is expected to foster more dynamic, meaningful, and relevant history learning that supports educational needs as well as the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage.

The Potential for Developing Area-Based Historical Tourism Destinations in Blitar City: A Synthesis of Cross-Era Historical Site Findings

The development of area-based historical tourism destinations in Blitar City should begin with a spatial understanding of the distribution of historical sites and their chronological grouping according to historical periods. This approach is essential to ensure that historical tourism development is not fragmented, but rather integrated both spatially and temporally. An area-based approach to historical tourism enables the management of heritage sites as a unified narrative space, thereby preventing tourist experiences from being limited to isolated, single-site visits. A number of cultural tourism studies emphasize that spatial proximity among sites is a crucial factor in building effective historical tourism destinations, as it influences accessibility, duration of visits, and visitors' comfort in understanding historical sequences coherently (Nurany et al., 2023). In addition, grouping sites based on historical periodization—such as classical, colonial, and national eras—facilitates the construction of coherent and educational tourism narratives. The classification of sites according to historical eras also contributes to the effectiveness of managing area-

based historical tourism destinations (Nofiyanti et al., 2025). Developing area-based urban historical tourism by considering inter-area distances and historical periodization represents a strategic approach that integrates heritage preservation, education, and tourism.

Blitar City, as a relatively small urban area, possesses a geographical advantage in the close proximity and high accessibility of its historical sites, enabling the efficient and sustainable development of cross-era historical tourism areas. Spatially, most historical sites in Blitar City are located within relatively close distances to one another, both in the city center and in surrounding buffer zones. Major sites such as Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro, the Bung Karno Tomb, the Bung Karno Proclamator Library, Istana Gebang, and the PETA Monument are situated within interconnected urban areas linked by primary road networks. This condition allows for the development of thematic historical tourism routes that can be completed within a short time frame, whether on foot, via tourist vehicles, or through environmentally friendly modes of transportation. The close proximity among sites serves as a critical asset in establishing an area-based tourism concept, as visitors are able not only to visit individual attractions but also to experience a sequence of historical narratives along a continuous urban spatial trajectory.

Based on historical periodization, the sites in Blitar City can be classified into several complementary era-based clusters. The classical Hindu–Buddhist period is represented by the presence of Gedog Temple, located on the city's periphery. Although slightly separated from the urban core, Gedog Temple remains within the broader Blitar tourism area and can function as the starting point of the historical narrative. This site represents the early phase of civilization and religious activity in East Java during the kingdom period, thereby holding significant value as an entry point to a cross-era historical tourism route.



Figure 17. Entrance to the Gedog Temple Area

The Islamic and colonial periods in Blitar City are characterized by a concentration of historical sites within the old urban area. Pesanggrahan Djojodigdan, the Tomb of Adipati Aryo Blitar, Pasarean Pangeranan Gebang, Langgar Gantung An-Nur, and Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro represent Blitar's transformation into an administrative and political center from the era of the *kadipaten* to the Dutch East Indies colonial period. The spatial proximity among sites within this cluster enables the development of a colonial historical tourism area that highlights local power dynamics, the role of the *priyayi* elite, and transformations in Blitar's urban structure. Era-based clustering facilitates the construction of systematic and educational tourism

narratives, as visitors are able to understand the historical development of Blitar in a chronological and contextual manner.



Figure 18. Entrance to the Blitar Urban Cultural Area (Site of the Tomb of Aryo Blitar)

The next cluster comprises the period of the national movement, the Japanese occupation, and the physical revolution, which is distributed across several strategic locations within the city. The PETA Monument, the PETA Uprising Memorial, the Training Center for Prospective TRIP Student Soldiers, and other struggle-related monuments demonstrate Blitar's significant role as a space of resistance and the formation of national consciousness. The distances between sites within this cluster are relatively close to the city center, allowing for integration with the colonial cluster within a single historical struggle tourism route. This spatial and thematic integration strengthens the narrative of Blitar as a city of struggle that made tangible contributions to the history of Indonesian independence.



Figure 19. The Mas TRIP Corridor, Blitar City

The post-independence era and the period of national leadership are centered on the Bung Karno Tomb Complex, the Bung Karno Proclamator Library, and Istana Gebang. These three sites are located within a single area that is interconnected both physically and symbolically, making them highly suitable for development as a nationalism-oriented historical tourism zone. Their spatial proximity and thematic unity allow this area to function as a core destination for educational history tourism that emphasizes leadership values, national identity, and the nation's collective memory. Within an area-based tourism framework, this cluster can serve as the final point of Blitar's historical trajectory, representing a phase of national maturity.



Figure 20. The Bung Karno Tomb Area Corridor

The City of Blitar covers an area of approximately 32.57 km², making it the second smallest city in East Java Province after Mojokerto (Blitar, 2022). Given its relatively compact size, the spatial distribution of historical sites in Blitar is characterized by close proximity, allowing them to be easily accessed through various modes of transportation. By considering the distances between sites and their classification according to historical periods, the development of historical tourism destinations in Blitar is supported by a strong foundational framework for integrated planning. An area-based approach enables the design of cross-period tourism routes that are coherent, educational, and accessible, while simultaneously preventing the fragmentation of historical narratives. Moreover, this approach facilitates the utilization of Blitar as an open laboratory for history learning, where visitors and students can engage with historical knowledge through direct experience within the urban landscape. Overall, the potential for developing area-based historical tourism in Blitar lies in the combination of spatial proximity among sites and the richness of interconnected historical legacies across different eras. The synthesis of spatial considerations, historical periodization, and area-based narratives positions Blitar as a promising historical tourism destination that offers not only recreational value but also educational significance and long-term sustainability. This approach further strengthens Blitar's role as a model for urban historical tourism development that supports cultural heritage preservation and the enhancement of public historical awareness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that Blitar City possesses sufficient historical, spatial, and educational capacity to be developed as an open laboratory for history learning as well as an area-based educational tourism destination. The integration of cross-era heritage sites distributed within a single urban landscape enables history learning to take place in a contextual, sustainable, and experiential manner. These findings have implications for strengthening place-based history learning models that not only enrich pedagogical processes but also support cultural heritage preservation and the development of educational tourism oriented toward historical values. Through

an area-based approach, Blitar City can be positioned as a living history learning space that is relevant to the needs of contemporary history education.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, as it focuses on qualitative analysis based on site observation and documentation without incorporating empirical measurements of learning impacts or direct user responses. In addition, the study has not yet examined in depth the practical implementation of history learning in formal education settings or the operational governance of educational tourism. Therefore, future research should be directed toward testing city-based history learning models in educational practice, including measuring their effectiveness in enhancing students' historical consciousness and understanding. Further studies may also develop policy analyses and stakeholder collaboration frameworks to ensure the sustainable utilization of Blitar City as an open laboratory for history learning and as a sustainable educational tourism destination.

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