Outline: The relationship between tourism, leisure and shopping; urban tourism issues raised by mega-mall development
The West Edmonton Mall was built in four phases and is one of the largest shopping malls in the world.

- Over 800 stores and services under one roof
- Provides a climate controlled environment
Convergence of Shopping, Leisure and Tourism

- The Edmonton Mall provides an extreme example of the convergence between shopping, tourism and leisure.
- So large a shopping complex that it seriously affected the retail aspects of downtown Edmonton and shifted the retail centre of the city.
- Attracts package trips from Western Canada and the northern United States.
Private space

- The Mall raises other issues with respect to urban tourism in that such places are actually private space even though they are often seen as public space.
- Many shopping malls act as a place where people meet and engage in leisure activity.
- However such activity has to be ‘appropriate’ otherwise people can be asked to leave.
- The Mall social environment is therefore more homogeneous than that of the communities in which it is situated.
Europa Boulevard –  
‘Be sure to take a stroll down Europa Boulevard for a touch of European elegance’ (brochure)

- The Mall contains a number of themed streets. As well as the Europa Boulevard there is a Chinatown and Bourbon Street where you can ‘Soak up the atmosphere and energy of New Orleans’ vibrant culture’ (WEM brochure)
Chinatown

- Chinatown, is ‘designed to reflect a traditional Chinese marketplace’ (WEM brochure)
- The range of different ‘ethnic areas’ serve to reinforce the convergence of shopping and leisure
Galaxyland is an undercover amusement park.
World Waterpark

- The World Waterpark includes an artificial beach, wave making machine and waterslides
- Surfing competitions are held
- Are such environments a substitute for beach resorts?
Deep Sea Adventure

- The Mall has a number of different areas in which different leisure activities can be held including diving and mini-golf.
- To what extent are such environments a response to climate issues or are they designed solely to maximise consumption?
Issues

- As well as the issue of private space vs public space, large malls and shopping centres raise other questions regarding:
  - Authenticity of experience
  - Cultural and place representation
  - Homogenisation and identity
  - Affect on other shopping, entertainment and retail areas and the employment they generate. To what extent do they just replace other centres rather than generate new development?
Further Reading & sources

- Vol.35(3) (1991) of the Canadian Geographer is a special issue on the mall.
- Colin Szasz an architect at McGill University in Canada also has a useful article on the ‘monolith’ of WEM: www.arch.mcgill.ca/prof/sijpkes/arch304/winter2001/cszasz/u1/wem.htm
- Also enter WEM into Google and be amazed!