

A group of people are riding camels up a large sand dune in a desert. The camels are carrying passengers, some wearing colorful clothing. The dune is a smooth, golden-brown slope under a clear blue sky. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the height of the dune.

ARE YOU READY FOR BUSINESS?

How to sell excursions to
UK tour operators

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual forms part of a collection of greener business tools available from the Travel Foundation to help tourism businesses take effective action on sustainable tourism. You can find out more here www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools

If you have found this manual useful and it has helped you to gain business from UK Tour Operators, the Travel Foundation would love to hear from you. Contact admin@thetravelfoundation.org.uk with your stories, data and feedback outlining how you have used this tool to grow your business.

The production of this guide has been paid for by donations from the travel industry and its customers. If you found it useful, and would like to support the ongoing work of the Travel Foundation - delivering groundbreaking projects in destinations globally, and developing free-to-use tools and resources for the benefit of the industry – you can donate to us here: <http://tinyurl.com/giveTF>



This manual was researched and written by Carole Favre, in collaboration with the International Centre for Research in Events, Tourism and Hospitality at Leeds Metropolitan University.

After starting her career in retail, Carole dedicated the last 13 years to training and teaching in tourism. She now works as a consultant and specialises in supporting small tourism businesses gain access to tour operators in a responsible and sustainable way. Extensively travelled herself, she has a strong understanding of western tourist motivations and needs, as well tourism markets and how to exploit their resources to provide memorable experiences to holidaymakers.

If you have enjoyed the 'what have you learned' sections in this manual and would like to undertake further training, please visit Carole's website www.small-matters.net



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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this manual is to help small tourism enterprises or community groups offering excursions expand their market away from direct sales by learning how to supply their products to UK tour operators.

This manual aims to help you sell your excursion(s) to UK tour operators. It is organised in 5 sections, which explain the necessary stages you need to go through to be market ready.

The most important thing is to start with designing an excursion that will appeal to the holidaymakers that visit your destination. Stage 1 provides information about the main factors that affect the design of your excursion. It enables you to also understand how different tour operators are looking for different experiences.

Equally important is Health & Safety as your excursion must meet certain hygiene, cleanliness and safety standards to be sold to UK tourists by UK tour operators. In Stage 2 you will find examples of risks you need to consider. You will also learn that some tourists and tour operators have more stringent standards than others.

Stage 3 focuses on pricing. There is no point in selling an excursion that is

not profitable enough for you to earn a living or too expensive for tourists to afford. You will learn about calculating prices and commission fees paid to ground handlers and tour operators when they sell your excursion. It is essential to ensure that your price is competitive when compared to similar other experiences.

After these three stages, you are now ready to start working with tour operators. Stage 4 explains how this happens, providing you with a list of information and documents you need to have to ensure you are successful in attracting a ground handler's or tour operator's interest, to be invited to your first meeting.

The last stage deals with what happens after your meeting, explaining that tour operators and ground handlers will take some time to ensure they are confident that they can work with you on a long term basis. You will learn how to show that you can deliver what they want: a quality product in a professional manner.

The most important thing is to start with designing an excursion that will appeal to the holidaymakers that visit your destination.

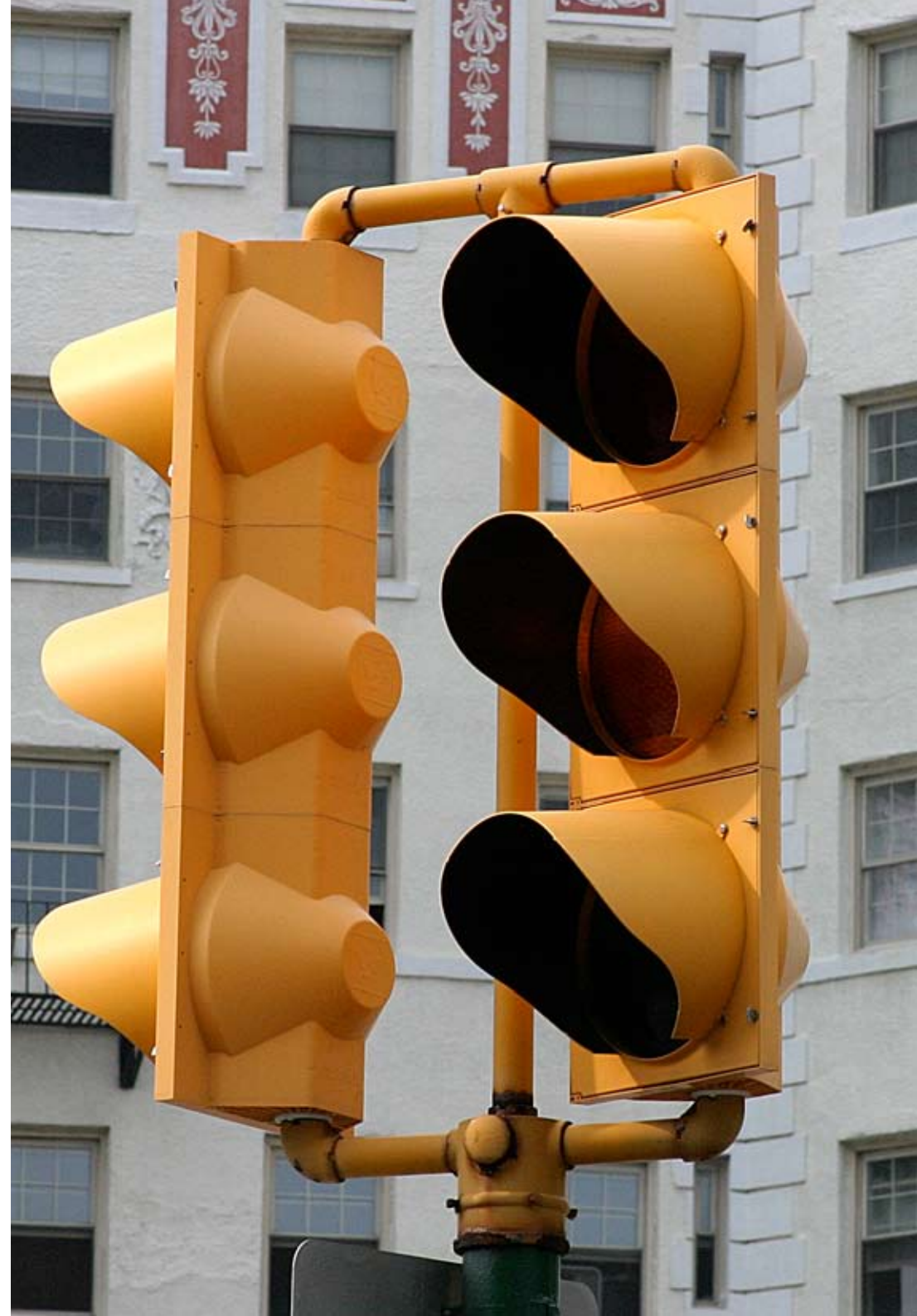
TWO WORDS OF CAUTION

Even if you follow its advice, this manual **cannot guarantee market access** to UK tour operators. This is because it only focuses on improving the relationship between YOU and UK tour operators. In fact, there are many other factors that can impact on your ability to sell your excursion such as political stability and general safety in your country, availability of loans for small enterprises, governmental support for tourism development, or standard of infrastructures (e.g. road or internet).

This manual is not the answer to all your problems!

Selling excursions to UK tour operators can be attractive because it might bring you a secure income stream. However, relying solely on this kind of business can be risky, creating a dependency on one market. In fact, all UK tour operators and ground handlers interviewed for this manual agree that small excursion providers should find ways to sell their excursions directly to independent travellers (from abroad and home), either through the internet or at the destination (for example via local travel agents or in hotels). This will ensure that you can earn money from different but complementary sources, throughout the year.

If you want your business to last, do not put all your eggs in the same basket!



HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

To benefit the most from this manual, you should dedicate one hour to learning about each stage, starting with Stage 1 to finish with Stage 5. In addition to the reading, there is an activity to complete at the end of each stage to see if you are ready to progress to the next section. In total, the manual should be fully completed in less than 20 hours. This includes time to think about what you are learning and finding, and how it impacts on your business and ideas.

You will come across the following four icons:



Key Term

Explains the meaning of an important word or concept often used by UK tour operators and ground handlers.



Helpful Tips

Gives you practical advice to help you design great excursions and meet the requirements of UK tour operators and ground handlers.



Think About It

Asks you questions related to the problems involved in working with certain types of UK tour operators to see if you have thought about everything carefully.



Be Better

Tells you what you can do, to show you are better than other companies.

In each chapter you will find a section entitled:

- **“What you need to know first”**: introduces some fundamental facts you must know.
- **“What have you learned?”**: gives you an opportunity to review essential facts with a question. Some may require internet access. If you do not have internet access at home, plan at some time to complete the work at a friend's or in an internet café.
- **“What have you done?”**: enables you to check that you have taken the necessary actions to successfully selling your excursion; also gives additional tips to make this possible.

All findings are practical, realistic and current BUT things can change quickly, so always be on the look out for new information. And don't forget, to ensure you learn a lot from this manual, read it with an open mind!

CONTRIBUTORS

In total **10** UK tour operators and **6** ground handlers took the time to contribute to this manual. Start by getting familiar with their names, roles, the holidays they offer, and the destinations they operate in. This information might be useful to you in the future. Three experts also helped corroborate all findings; you'll read about them in the manual.

Ground handlers

Most UK tour operators rely on **a local company acting as their representative** known as a "ground handler", "ground agent" or "destination management company" to organise and supervise holidays at the destination. Their most important role is to ensure that tourists have a great time.



Sasha Skeel Taylor
General Manager
Located in Kenya and established since 1986.
www.albatros-travel.com



Thomas Carnevale
Managing Director
Myanmar
Based in 8 countries in Asia.
www.asiantrails.travel



Beth Wilson
Product Manager
One of the largest ground agents in South-East Asia.
www.buffalotours.com



Roger Frost
Co-founder
Experts in off the beaten track holidays and road trips in Argentina.
www.htargentina.com



Beat Brunschwiler
Director
Catering for a wide range of special interests (e.g. markets & textiles, festivals)
www.viaventure.com



Jane Goldring
General Manager
Located in Uganda specialising in cruises and safaris.
www.wildfrontiers.co.ug



CONTRIBUTORS

Tour operators

Tour operators **sell package holidays** to tourists in the UK, in shops, on the internet or over the phone. A package holiday is a mixture of two of the following elements: accommodation, transport or other services (e.g. food, excursion, car hire, theatre tickets). Often it includes at least one meal, flight tickets and hotel stay. All-inclusive packages include all meals and activities too.



Gavin Bate

Director

Established in 1991, as a small expedition company. Known for highly professional and responsible breaks.

Offers mainly mountaineering holidays but also safaris, trekking and school & gap year packages. Operates in 15 countries.

www.adventurealternative.com



Cass Miller-Jones

Acting Operations Manager

Has won many awards in the UK press for the quality of its customer service. Focusses on excursions and guides.

Plans tailor-made holidays for discerning travellers, mostly couples and small groups. Operates on all continents.

www.audleytravel.com



Jim Eite

Product Director

A leader in adventure travel, committed to responsible tourism. Part of the large PEAK Adventure Travel group, owned by TUI.

Specialises in cultural, walking, cycling, winter activities, photographic and wildlife holidays for small groups. Operates on all continents, in 116 destinations.

www.exodus.co.uk



John Telfer

Products & Operations Director

A leader in adventure travel, committed to responsible tourism. Part of Holiday Break Plc, a European specialist holiday group.

Small group holidays with various levels of comfort, for individuals and families. Present in 120 countries.

www.explore.co.uk



David Nichols

Product Manager

Number 1 travel specialist to Latin America. Long established and highly knowledgeable staff.

Specialises in tailor-made holidays and set itineraries for small group tours from value to luxury budgets. Operates in 26 countries.

www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk



CONTRIBUTORS



Dave Tucker
Co-Founder

New and small ethical tour operator that ensures local people benefit from tourism.

Specialises in tailor-made tours, ecofriendly, cultural and adventure holidays. Operates in Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru and Thailand.

www.beyondtourism.co.uk



Jo Baddeley
Sustainable Destinations
Manager

The oldest tour operator in the world, which invented mass-market tourism and package holidays.

Offers holidays to over 15 beach destinations in developing countries and also has brands that specialise in luxury travel and city breaks.

www.thomascook.com



Sean Owens
Sustainable Product
Manager

TUI Travel PLC is the world's largest tour operator, featuring over 200 brands, including Thomson and First Choice in the UK.

First Choice only sells all-inclusive holidays, in sunny destinations. Thomson offers packages and cruises at different budgets, with a weblink to a collection of activity holidays.

www.thomson.co.uk
www.firstchoice.co.uk
www.iexplore.co.uk



Klaudija Janzelj
Global Sales
Manager

No1 UK excursion-only tour operator. Part of the PEAK Adventure Travel group (see TUI above).

Specialises in guided city tours run by local people in 47 countries and in more than 80 cities around the world. Offers bicycle, hiking, food, kayak, beer and drinks day and night tours.

www.urbanadventures.com



Richard Hearn
Director

Award-winning small tour operator ethically committed to community tourism and helping poorer rural populations.

Organises walking tours visiting villages in India and Ethiopia. Tours offer a real opportunity for travellers to engage with villagers.

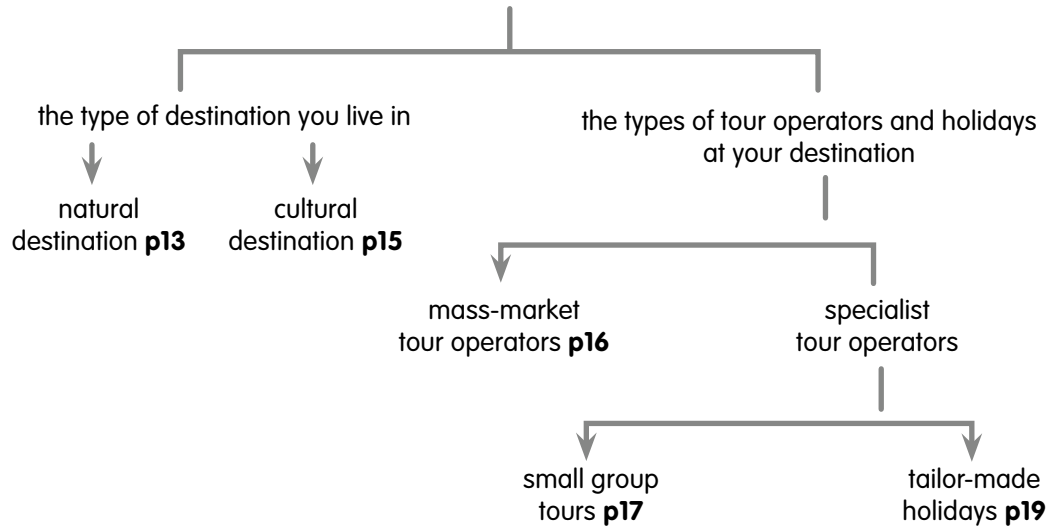
www.villageways.com



STAGE 1 DESIGN THE EXCURSION

DESIGN THE EXCURSION

You will need to think about:



The key to success is to design an excursion that appeals to tourists visiting your destination.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

What do tour operators want?

All tour operators are looking for excursions that “add value” to:

- 1) their **company**: do you offer an excursion that helps tour operators attract more clients AND helps them differentiate themselves from their competitors?
- 2) their **clients**: will the clients have a memorable experience AND tell other people about it?
- 3) their **destinations**: does your excursion impact positively on local communities and their environment?

Why is excursion design important?

Although price matters, you will not be able to sell your excursion on the basis of being cheaper than your competitor, especially if you offer exactly the same activities and itinerary. This is because ground handlers and tour operators see no value in replacing providers they have worked with for years and which they trust to deliver the quality service UK tourists demand.

What are my options?

The only way you will gain market access is by designing an excursion that:

- offers an experience not sold in the UK – new product/unique experience
- is located somewhere different but easily accessible – new destination
- adds experiences and enhances the quality of an excursion that already exists – improved product (remember earlier about adding value?)

What matters most?

Your excursion must fit within the type of activities and destinations sold by the tour operator you wish to work with. It has to be attractive to their customers too.



Key Term

“Adding value” is about finding a way to make an excursion really special so that tourists always want to buy it and recommend it to others. It can be achieved by offering very attentive personal customer service, in depth knowledge about a place and its people, extra comfort, additional services or convenience AND opportunities to contribute to the local communities visited.



David says: “Our clients want to feel like they are doing things other tourist are not doing because they are looking for unique experiences; BUT they also want to visit popular historical sites that are very crowded – what can you do? Organise visits early in the morning, when the site is empty so that our clients can take great pictures (improved product). By the time all other tourists arrive, take our clients on a tour of the local market to the nearest village (new destination) where they can buy food, which they could cook for lunch (new product/unique experience). This is an experience they will never forget”.



Be Better

To add even more value to your excursion, refer to the Travel Foundation’s ‘Greener Excursion’ tool www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/greener_excursions



Think About It

Your chosen option is actually dictated by the type of destination you live in, AND the type of tour operators and tourists already visiting your area. The next 2 pages provide information about 2 types of destinations.

EXCURSIONS IN NATURAL DESTINATIONS

Natural destinations appeal to UK tourists who primarily want to **see** or **engage in physical activities** set in beautiful landscapes, AND/OR watch **wildlife**. Generally first-time visitors do not really want to do anything else BUT repeat visitors are likely to show some interest in learning about the local culture.

About activities

Activities can be easy-going or strenuous, depending on what the visitors want. Popular examples include:

- walking, hiking, mountaineering
- spotting animals (jeep or walking safari/boat tour)
- cruising or canoeing (lake/river)
- cycling
- swimming, snorkelling, diving

In some countries, many activities are already offered by lodges or hotels located in national parks, which makes it very difficult to offer an excursion as an independent supplier.

About duration

Because they spend much time driving or flying from one natural site to another, UK tourists have little time for additional activities. One option is to offer them excursions that are very short (2 hours) and involve lots of quick experiences.

About location

To make it very convenient, excursions should be located near a significant landmark (e.g. national park), the hotel/campsite where tourists stay, or a popular restaurant where they stop on their way.



A good idea is to design an excursion that focusses on the relationship between animals and local communities. In Uganda, Wildfrontiers sells an excursion that introduces tourists to the challenges of farming and living near a national park. Two villagers show tourists the trench they have built to protect themselves against elephants, explain how the trench was built, take tourists inside the trench to show how deep and difficult it is to maintain. Tourists are also shown millet fields and the whole process from reaping millet crop to baking millet bread.



Albatros Travel in Kenya offers an excursion to the village of Mto Wa Mbu, where many tourists stop to take a break from their long journey on the way to two popular national parks. The excursion lasts 1 hour, includes a tour around the village to see how people live, a visit to the local school and a stop at the local bar to try the locally-produced banana beer. Some income from tourists is invested in education, environment protection and women empowerment.



Be Better

For more information refer to the Travel Foundation's 'Greener Excursion' tool on timing www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/greener_excursions/creating_new_excursions/timing

EXCURSIONS IN CULTURAL DESTINATIONS

Cultural destinations appeal to UK tourists who primarily want to find out about other people's way of life by learning about their traditions, food, religion and history. They increasingly want to do something **a bit different** and expect to **interact and do things with local people** to make their learning experience more emotional, authentic, unique and interesting.

About activities

Typical examples include guided tours of:

- popular historical, cultural and religious landmarks
- culturally-rich neighbourhoods less known to tourists (e.g. townships/ markets) - in cities
- villages and tribal areas – in the country

Many cultural destinations are set in beautiful natural settings. In this case, it can be a good idea to integrate some mild physical activities as part of the excursion.

About duration

Cultural tourists are usually less time-conscious and will purchase one day, ½ day and overnight stays.

For more information refer to the Travel Foundation's 'Greener Excursion' tool on timing www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/greener_excursions/creating_new_excursions/timing



One of Buffalo Tours' most popular excursions is an overnight excursion near a popular national park. Tourists stay in a traditional and comfortable village house, built with local materials. During the day, they can help the villagers with their daily chores (e.g. fish, plant crops, cook dinner), and go on a bike tour to visit a popular war memorial site.

About location

Tourists want to explore "off-the-beaten-track" places BUT they are not ready to travel to remote areas, which are hard, expensive and time consuming to get to. Ensure your excursion is accessible



Key Term

Off-the-beaten-track destinations are places (e.g. villages, neighbourhoods) that are located closely to major tourist landmarks but have not yet been discovered by tourists: they should have their own cultural identity.



Helpful Tips

Locate:

- day tours: maximum 2 hours travel time from pick-up point
- ½ day tours: at destination or within a 30 minutes drive radius



Food tours are increasingly popular with UK travellers. Urban Adventures offers 2 options in South America :

- Mexico: a walking half day-tour of the market, explaining local ingredients followed by lunch at the market
- Ecuador: a walking heritage and architecture tour mixed with visits at artisan bakers and local cooks, ending with a cooking class

Natural destinations appeal to UK tourists who primarily want to see or engage in physical activities set in beautiful landscapes, and/or watch wildlife.



MASS MARKET TOUR OPERATORS



What do I need to know first?

In the UK, mass-market tour operators mostly offer package holidays to popular coastal destinations. They **rarely work with small excursion providers** although they increasingly would like to.

They sell excursions as **stand alone tours**, which can be bought prior to travel in the UK (on the internet, in call centres or travel agencies) OR most often, at the destination (in hotels - through their staff working at the destination for the season).

They will only work with you if you offer an excursion that will appeal to a large number of their clients because:

- there will be **enough bookings** to avoid cancellations (cancellations upset tourists and give a bad reputation to the tour operator)
- they make a **healthy profit** selling your excursion

What kind of excursion best matches these tourists' needs?

These tour operators attract mainly families and couples on holidays to relax and have fun. They like to experience some authenticity and adventure as long as they feel safe and comfortable.



Jo explains: "Our clients enjoy tasting local food in reputable and clean restaurants. Traditionally, UK tourists are not very interested in physical activities such as hiking or cycling (but this is changing). Families like to have fun and we always look for exciting and educational activities for children; we are especially keen on activities that teach about environment and wildlife protection".

+ Bring large numbers of tourists at regular times

- Some tourists (although by no means all) are not interested in leaving their hotel as they are only on holiday for relaxation

+ Groups can reach between 25 to 50 clients

- Logistics are more complex for large groups (e.g. sites are not big enough or accessible, guiding is harder)

+ Repeat visitors want to experience something new

- They know the destination very well and think they can do everything on their own



Think About It

Each year, these tour operators review their excursion programmes. They can increase or reduce the number of times they run your excursion. They can decide that hotels for families should suddenly only cater to couples. **Are you flexible and creative enough to change the content of your excursion if they want you to?**



Helpful Tips

Check if these tour operators have been flying to your destination for a long time. Those that are new are more likely to stop flying if your destination becomes less popular with tourists.

SPECIALIST TOUR OPERATORS: ORGANISED TOURS FOR SMALL GROUPS

What do I need to know first?

In the UK, these holidays are usually sold by adventure/activity tour operators. They **are interested in working with small excursion providers** because they are believed to provide a much better customer experience. They also think that supporting small businesses is the right thing to do and that it sets them apart from other companies.

These operators sell tours to small groups (averaging 16 to 18 people), which usually last from 7 to 26 days and stop at different destinations. They primarily **include excursions in their itinerary** in order to offer a variety of activities throughout the tour. They have to make sure that their clients are always busy doing different things. In some destinations, travellers are given free time to enjoy local excursions which will be sold as stand alone tours (excursions sold separately to the rest of the trip).

What kind of excursion best matches these tourists' needs?

These tourists attract couples, solo travellers (male & female) but also families, who want to learn about the destination. They love cultural and authentic encounters and discovering places off-the-beaten-track. They also enjoy a variety of physical activities.



Jim explains: "There are very few unique excursions; what we want is something that adds value to our clients and gets them immersed in the culture and the nature of the destination. For example, we like stopping in small villages where tourists can learn about life and eat in local restaurants, as this also supports the local economy, which is very important to us. We will only deal with excursion providers that ensure that the communities we visit want to be involved in tourism and are welcoming to tourists".

+ Bring groups of travellers at regular and set times

- From 10% to 30% of tours might be cancelled. Often, you are paid per tourist so if the bus is half-full, you earn less.

+ Bring travellers that want to do different things

- Itineraries very rarely change unless UK travellers start asking increasingly for specific activities (e.g. cooking lessons & cycling)

+ Travellers want to discover off-the-beaten-track destinations

- Tour operators limit the number of tours they offer at one destination to ensure they maximise sales. This makes it hard to promote a new area.



Helpful Tips

A Tour Leader looks after each group for the duration of the holiday. He/she is already very knowledgeable about the destination. Your excursion needs to offer something this Tour Leader cannot already offer.

SPECIALIST TOUR OPERATORS: TAILOR-MADE TOURS FOR INDIVIDUALS



JOURNEY
LATIN
AMERICA

THE
BEYOND
TOURISM Co.

AUDLEY

What do I need to know first?

In the UK, these holidays are provided by companies that cover the whole world OR some regions in the world OR one destination only. They **are totally committed to working with small excursion providers** because they really believe in supporting local entrepreneurs in developing countries to help alleviate poverty. Like adventure/activity tour operators they think that small companies provide better customer service and more interesting experiences to their clients.

These operators will design each holiday they sell from scratch and will look for a mixture of excursion providers to **create an itinerary** that meets their clients' requirements. They look for local agents that can deliver excellent customer service with local guides that are very knowledgeable. They want each one of their clients to **feel unique**.

What kind of excursion best matches these tourists' needs?

These tourists are mainly couples and families, whose prime concern is to gain an **in-depth knowledge** of the destination by learning about the culture and by visiting historical sites.



Cass at Audley says: "Our clients are relatively serious with their holidays and are looking for well-informed traditional guided tours. For them it is all about the quality of the learning experience".



At The Beyond Tourism Co., Dave looks for interesting and unique excursions often involving the community AND well-known highlights but these must be tours run in a different and ethical way. He wants his clients to FEEL THE LOVE that the guide has for his/her community and environment.

+ Tourists are really interested in learning about the destination.

- They are well educated and if you do not have the expertise to answer their questions you will soon be found out!

+ Tourists have a wide range of interests and will pay a premium for their experience.

- If you are very specialised (e.g. birdwatching) you might get very few bookings if there is little interest for your activity.

+ Tailor-made tour operators will spend more time advising you on designing a good excursion.

- This will not guarantee that you get clients as tourists might be looking for a different experience AND most bookings are only for couples.



Be Better

These tour operators want your excursions to reflect their **company philosophy**: you need to show that you respect and contribute to the lives of the local communities you visit, as well as minimise the environmental impacts you create.

There are very few unique excursions; what we want is something that adds value to our clients and gets them immersed in the culture and the nature of the destination.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN STAGE 1?

Read this extract from Audley Travel's website. What kind of experience do you think these tourists are looking for?

If you're undecided as to whether a group tour is for you, take a look at some of the reasons why many of our clients book a group tour with us:

- Travel with a small group of like-minded people.
- Enjoy the peace of mind that comes with having an experienced tour leader who knows the country or region you are visiting.
- Benefit from the in-depth knowledge of your guide, who can highlight lesser known places or areas that you might otherwise miss.
- Each group tour is designed and created by one of our knowledgeable specialists, which means you get the same Audley quality and service on your group tour as you would on one of our tailor-made trips.
- Solo travellers will find our group tours are an excellent alternative to visiting an unknown country on their own. Many of our clients tell us about the strong friendships they have formed during their group tour with us.
- Unlike many other group tour organisers, we keep the number of people in our groups deliberately low (usually no more than 16), which means that you can visit many places that some of the larger groups can't and you stay in smaller, more characterful accommodation.

To check your answer go to page 72

Now that you have completed this, take some time to think about what you have learned and how this will impact your business. You might want to complete more activities on **www.small-matters.net** in order to ensure you are fully prepared for the next stage.



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

a) Have you researched the supply of excursions and tours by specialist tour operators in your area and country?

☐

Search the internet; google “beach holidays to Goa” or “tailor-made holidays to Kenya”. Visit your local travel agents and ask the Tourist Information Centre if there is one where you live.

b) Have you made a list of all the different reasons tourists travel to your destination AND do you know what types of tourists visit?

☐

Observe the tourists at your destination; where do they go, what do they do in their free time? Do they have much free time? Speak to guides, tour leaders and tourists too – just ask them what they like to do.

c) Have you decided which type of tour operator you feel more able to work with?

☐

Think about the number of tourists you can handle at one time, the places you would like to visit and if you can deal with the fact that business might not be regular. What type of experiences do you want to offer?

d) If you are visiting and working with communities, have you made sure that they benefit from tourism and that their environment is not damaged?

☐

For example, do you encourage tourists to buy drinks in local shops on their journey, do you pay the villages or families you visit?

My notes

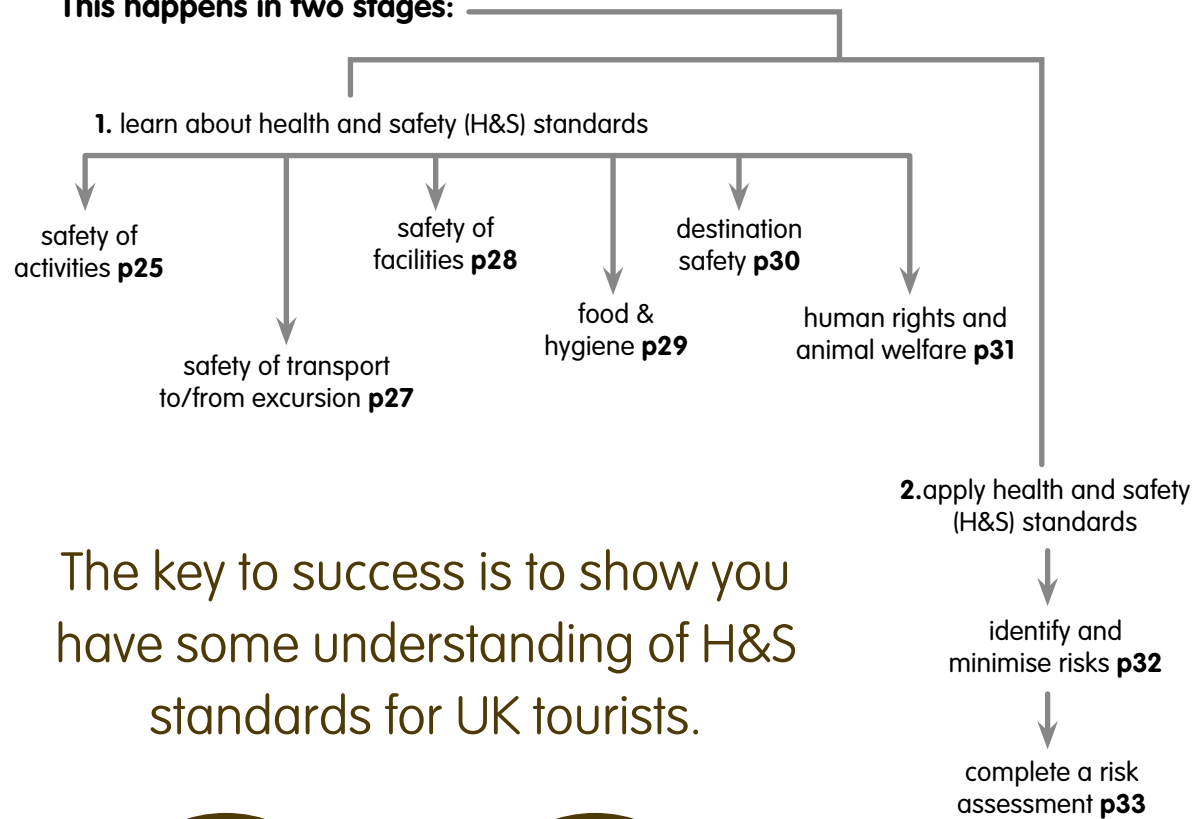


STAGE 2

ENSURE THE
EXCURSION
IS SAFE

STAGE 2 ENSURE THE EXCURSION IS SAFE

This happens in two stages:



The key to success is to show you have some understanding of H&S standards for UK tourists.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

Why is H&S so important?

In the UK, H&S is taken more seriously than anywhere else in the world (apart maybe from the USA) because under British law, tour operators can be prosecuted for 'manslaughter', a criminal offence punished by imprisonment.



UK standards are among the highest in the world, but many developing countries and resorts still have a long way to go to bring their transport, accommodation and services up to the level you normally take for granted. This applies to many European resorts, as well as more exotict destinations.

What matters most?

As a minimum, all tour operators require that you follow the laws applicable in your country. They also take advice from The Federation of Tour Operators (FTO). The FTO issues guidelines to help them understand how to comply with European legislation, which demand they show duty of care to tourists.

What do tour operators want?

Tour operators need to be sure that you understand HOW to take care of tourists. They want you to think about the potential dangers of your excursion. You do not need to identify every risk BUT you need to provide a risk assessment form to show you understand how the main risks can be minimised.



Helpful Tips

Research all the laws regulating the practice of the activities you are planning to include in your excursions.

How does it work?

The way FTO guidelines are interpreted and enforced **depends on the tour operator**: the bigger the tour operator (either mass-market, adventure or tailor-made), the less flexible it will be.

A. Large tour operators will ask the ground handler or a company specialising in H&S audits to run lots of safety checks and complete lots of forms to show that you comply with their standards. These forms represent proof that they show duty of care (see above) and make it easier to control H&S because they deal with large numbers of tourists, which increases the chance that something can go wrong.

B. Small tour operators offering easy-going activities (e.g. walking, cultural tours) will also have H&S standards but they will trust the ground handler to check on those. They might not even have forms to complete or they might send forms you complete yourself. They could also deal with you directly and help you meet standards in practical ways

C. Small tour operators specialising in dangerous activities (e.g. mountaineering, climbing) will also have forms and will be very strict but they are most likely to deal with you directly and offer support with H&S issues.

SAFETY OF ACTIVITIES

UK tour operators are concerned that small excursion providers might lack H&S knowledge. Knowing about H&S really **increases your chances** to sell your excursion.

What should I consider?

H&S covers 5 aspects:

- 1) safety of transport to/from excursion
- 2) safety of facilities
- 3) food hygiene
- 4) personal safety and security of tourists on the excursion
- 5) human rights and animal welfare

What matters most?

Even non-dangerous activities can present risks. Therefore you need to ensure tourists are kept safe. Remember, it's not about what you think BUT about what tourists think is safe.

What happens if something goes wrong?

You need to buy **Public Liability Insurance** to protect yourself against claims related to potential risks (e.g. someone gets food poisoning, hurts themselves). Large tour operators will not work with you unless you have that insurance.



"Health and Safety is not something we can sell to customers as a bonus. It is something they will expect us to have checked."



Adventure Alternative gives some guidelines to follow:

- ✓ Ensure trekking teams remain in contact with each other and that whistles, phones and torches are carried along with the first aid kit
- ✓ Make sure clients understand the risks associated with additional activities such as snorkelling and swimming, or any hazardous activity, and ensure that all safety procedures are followed
- ✓ Comply with all National Park codes of conduct, mountain safety codes of practice and applicable rules for entering areas where a safety policy exists
- ✓ Make sure cooking and washing is done in boiled water, and that both staff and clients are encouraged to follow hygienic practices



Our **first expert**, John de Vial, Head of Financial Protection at ABTA, the most important association of travel agents and tour operators in the UK, explains: "Some small excursion providers ask their clients to sign a "Disclaimer" or "Indemnity Form" to avoid taking responsibility in case of accidents. If YOU are at fault, these forms will NOT be valid under European law and will not protect you in case tourists seek financial compensation".



Helpful Tips

In some countries, this public liability insurance does not exist, is too expensive or too difficult to obtain. In this case, **contact ground handlers** as some will be ready to take this insurance on your behalf.



Even non-dangerous activities can present risks. Therefore you need to ensure tourists are kept safe.

SAFETY OF TRANSPORT TO/FROM EXCURSION

Why does it matter?

Road accidents are always widely reported in the press. This results in very bad publicity for tour operators in the UK. This is why you should not use unlicensed local public transport/taxis for your excursion.

What are my options?

Most ground handlers will have their own transport and drivers and might expect you to use these as they fully control the safety of their own vehicles and training of their staff. They will also be licensed, which could be a legal requirement in your country AND insured, which could be too expensive for you to afford.

What standards should I meet?

Concentrate on:

- **the quality of the driving:** show tourists that you care about their safety so don't drive too quickly. Remember, 'slow' for you might be 'quick' for them.
- **the quality of the vehicle, inside and outside:** provide the best vehicle that is available in your area so that tourists can see that they are looked after and get value for money (see p32).



Think
About It

Why arrange your own transport when it can be supplied by the ground handler?

sky NEWS HD Kenya Coach Crash: Three Brits Injured

Eyewitnesses describe how the vehicle - carrying holidaymakers - rolled down an embankment into oncoming traffic.

The Telegraph

45 Britains injured in holiday bus crash

By Amberin Zaman in Ankara and Sally Pook 12:01 AM BST 26 Sep 2002



Tourists will be used to comfortable transport at home, therefore Kuoni advises excursion providers to always explain to tourists that their vehicle is the best that is available in that area. Even if standards are lower than that experienced in the UK, you should have good documentation of the maintenance and upkeep of the vehicle, and proof that the driver is licensed and properly trained.



Helpful Tips

It's all about safety but also comfort.

Ask the following questions:

- 1) do seat belts work?
- 2) if there is no air-conditioning, do windows open safely?
- 3) are any seats broken?
- 4) is there space for hand luggage to travel comfortably?
- 5) where are the repair kit and spares?



Be Better

The Travel Foundation's 'Greener Excursion' tool includes a section on reducing the environmental impact of transport www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/greener_excursions/improving_existing_excursions/transport3

SAFETY OF FACILITIES: BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND TRANSPORT

Buildings

There are 2 important elements to focus on:

- 1) fire safety: consider escape route and how to stop fires
- 2) WC: toilets can be rudimentary but must be clean; tourists must be able to wash their hands in a safe and hygienic way.



Jo at Thomas Cook says: "Hand washing facilities should be provided to our customers, no matter how basic the toilet. We regard liquid soap as more hygienic than soap bars". Facilities can be basic but must be hygienic.



Jane at Wild Frontiers explains: "We had to build a 'drop-down' WC for one of our village excursions. Only tourists are allowed to use these. They are cleaned before and after each visit, and toilet paper is provided".

Equipment

Quality and availability of equipment matter most. Local laws should explain what equipment is needed BUT this might not comply with European or international legislation. In that case, the tour operator will tell the client that the equipment is not available BEFORE the excursion. Tourists then decide what they want to do.



Helpful Tips

If you have the equipment (e.g. life jackets or helmets), don't forget to give it to tourists at the start of the excursion!

Transport

You can use many types of transport as part of your activities: safari jeeps, quad bikes, bicycles, rickshaws, canoes, boats etc. The bigger and more dangerous the mode of transport, the more checks and paperwork will be needed. Some transport modes are also more expensive to insure, and will require specific qualifications to use and maintain.



At Wild Frontiers, we offer a boat excursion on a lake run by a local guide who decided to create his own business. He has to provide us with evidence that:

- the boat is inspected regularly
- there are quality life jackets on board
- the right oil is used for the engine
- the captain has the right qualifications



"At Audley Travel, we offer horse-riding excursions in Argentina. To meet European H&S standards, our suppliers should provide helmets but they are not required there and therefore sometimes not provided. Consequently, we talk to our clients before they book their holidays, and explain the situation. Most of the time they do not mind but at least they know, which is what matters as they can make an informed decision".

Cape Town boat capsizes: Peter Hyett dies in Hout Bay

A British man has died after a tourist boat carrying 39 people capsizes during seal-watching trip



FOOD HYGIENE

What is it about?

Tour operators mainly worry about tourists getting ill when eating food or drinking water. Tourists often get minor stomach upset when on holidays and if they fall ill after your excursion, they may automatically assume that it's your fault, which will give you a very bad reputation.

What standards should I meet?

Hygiene is crucial to all types of tour operators:

- **water** must be treated to use for cooking and washing up
- **food** must be stored in fridges and cooked in a clean area

However, there is a difference in the way minimum hygiene standards can be achieved because some tourists and tour operators are more understanding and accept that facilities can be limited.



Both TUI and Thomas Cook offer mass-market holidays and require hot running water for cooking and washing up BUT Thomas Cook doesn't expect European-style fridge and storage facilities as long as the **food is prepared hygienically** and **eaten straight away**.



As we saw in Stage 1, Urban Aventures offers food tours and stops at local food stalls. They do not feel that food hygiene is a major issue as the food is always fried BUT they expect **street food providers to be reliable and clean** as their clients trust them to take them to the best eateries in town.



Think
About It

If you cannot find a local restaurant or café that meets H&S standards, what can you do? **Shorten the duration of your excursion and don't offer food**

What does this mean practically?

- 1) rely on fresh food (bought the same day)
- 2) ensure food is stored and separated properly in a fridge
- 3) if there are no fridges, cook vegetarian food instead of meat
- 4) keep food away from flies during cooking
- 5) fry food to ensure it's safer to eat
- 6) wash and rinse all cooking pots and utensils in hot water and store in a place that is clean and enclosed



Richard from Villageways explains: "We specialise in walking-cultural-village tours in India. Our clients are open-minded but will not compromise on food safety. I expect cooking staff to be trained in food hygiene. Food is cooked on open fires but that doesn't affect hygiene standards as food is fresh and sourced locally. Running water is not necessary but water must be treated, filtered and boiled AND all tourists must be explained **how hygiene standards are met** if they ask".

DESTINATION SAFETY: HASSLE, MEDICAL CARE AND CRIME

Hassle

Most tourists get really **distressed** or **afraid** when confronted with poverty, especially begging. This is because they are on holidays to have a good time and do not know how to react in such situations. It is much harder for tourists staying in nice hotels because they are used to luxury and **cannot handle the reality of life** in less wealthy countries.

Medical care



My family and I travelled on DCL for the October 16-23 cruise. Because we were with an infant that is just 6 months old, we wanted to book excursions that were safe and secure, with quick access to emergency services, if needed. A general precaution that we didn't think much of - just being smart and safe



Richard stresses: "One of the most important elements that determines the safety of an excursion is its proximity to a good doctor and hospital. Find the best medical care available in your area and have access to a telephone number you can ring in case of emergency".

Rio de Janeiro



Forget about the beautiful beaches, the even more beautiful people, the warmth, the music and the fun. It's adrenaline pumping fear and an experience that makes you never so happy to be alive then try visiting the favelas. The murder rate for Rio is 37 in every 100,000 making it a very dangerous place indeed. The police are just as dangerous killing three-times more on average than in the U.S. There are many daily tourist excursions into the favelas where you can view the shanty town from behind the bullet-proof glass of a 4x4 but for a genuine experience you can stay in one of the favela hotels that have opened their doors in recent years.



Helpful Tips

Look at the FTO website – it provides information about countries and areas that UK tourists are advised not to visit.



Jane gives us this example: "A couple of years ago, we had an excursion to visit an authentic fishing village near Chimp island (a popular tourist attraction). Tourists went to visit the local school, to see how the fishermen throw their nets and catch fish but it soon stopped. The village was very dirty, with no toilets facilities for visitors, local people were drunk and would attack the tourists for money, and children would beg. This made the whole experience really unpleasant and quite upsetting. The problem is that the community was not involved at all with this excursion and did not want the tourists there.

Crime

Crimes against tourists can range from petty theft to life-threatening attacks. As long as you do what you can to minimise the risks your clients can be confronted by and do not take unnecessary risks, it is possible to organise excursions, even in areas that are perceived as somewhat dangerous.

Cape Town



It's hard to find a place that has so much natural beauty and yet with such turbulent history. With cosmopolitan vibrancy and modern glamour sitting cheek-by-jowl with heady reminders of the country's painful birth and apartheid history, serious poverty abounds. The population is seriously affected by an HIV/AIDS epidemic and crime and kidnappings are always a threat. Visit the Townships for a wake-up call and witness the poverty, but also get a lesson in the tenacity and ingenuity of the locals.



Be Better

Always consult with the local communities and authorities to ensure tourists are welcomed and can feel safe.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Human rights

When on holiday, British tourists expect to see that people working for, and with excursion providers are treated with respect and care. UK tour operators are particularly concerned with **children's rights** and **human rights**.



Key Term

Background information

Child protection refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children - including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. Violations of the child's right to protection take place in every country and are massive, under recognised and under reported barriers to child survival and development, in addition to being human rights violations



Tourism Concern is an organisation that is dedicated to promoting human rights in the tourism industry. For example they work on bettering the rights of women, ethnic minorities or mountain porters, and on ensuring the right to fair pay, promotion and training for local employees.



Be Better

For more information about animal welfare refer to the Travel Foundation's 'Animal Welfare & Tourism' tool www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/animal_welfare_tourism

Animal welfare

In excursions, animals can be involved as:

- a means of transport (e.g. camel, elephant, horse, donkey rides)
- part of activities, such as swimming with dolphins, whale watching or walking safaris

British holidaymakers are very concerned about animal welfare and will **complain to tour operators** if they observe malpractice.



Sean explains: "At TUI, we are strongly committed to animal welfare and work very closely with other organisations and industry associations such as ABTA to make sure our suppliers meet the best possible standards regarding the health and well-being of animals. If we did not, our holidaymakers would be very unhappy and disappointed with their holiday".

The "Five Freedoms"

At Thomas Cook we care deeply about the welfare of animals, not only those that feature tourist attractions but also those that are impacted upon by tourism.

1. Food and water
2. A suitable living environment
3. Good health
4. An opportunity to exhibit natural behaviours
5. Protection from fear and distress

We encourage all our customers to report any instances of animal neglect and cruelty that they may encounter when on holiday. Thankfully such incidents are very rare, but if witnessed you may like to know that there is something practical you can do to help.



"The animal cruelty and abuse at the Temple was blatant and obvious to me from the minute I arrived" Worried traveller

IDENTIFYING AND MINIMISING RISKS

There will always be some risk associated to running any type of excursion. What matters is that you manage that risk in the best possible way to protect tourists against unnecessary dangers.



Key Term

Assessing risks is about identifying risks, and prioritising these risks according to their level of danger. It also involves deciding how the risk should be minimised and if the risk is worth taking or not.

How do I assess risks?

Dangers are usually graded as high, medium or low according to:

- 1) how likely they are to happen
- 2) the type of injury they generate

What do I need to do?

You need to complete a risk assessment form (see next page). Most tour operators or ground handlers will have their own forms, which can be very detailed. These will only be used once they show interest in your excursion.

EXPLORE!

Safety - ensure the safety and wellbeing of our customers, staff and suppliers at all times. Safety is the over-riding factor when making any operational decision.



Ensure the safety of all our clients, whilst maintaining a spirit of adventure.



Helpful Tips

The rating of the danger will greatly depend on the type of tourists (e.g. age, level of fitness, level of expertise) participating in the excursion. This means that you might need to have more than one risk assessment form per activity

holidayclaims.com

Accident on Excursion In St Lucia

Mr Clayton and Mrs Richardson had purchased a package holiday to St. Lucia and at their welcome meeting, they decided to book a jeep safari excursion which included a walk to a waterfall in the rain forest. This involved crossing a deep and fast flowing river. They were encouraged to cross the river in twos by the guide who was with them and, as they did so, they were both swept away by the force of the river and sustained injury.

Mrs Richardson sustained a head injury, injury to her left ribs, bruising to her arms, body and legs and psychological symptoms including a fear of water. Mr Clayton sustained bruising to both arms, a tear of the biceps muscle, a tear of the tendons in both elbows and cuts and bruises to both forearms and wrists, together with cuts and bruises to both legs. Mr Clayton also suffered psychological injury.



Our first and single biggest objective is the reduction of risk to health and safety as far as is practically possible.



Helpful Tips

Remember that no amount of forms replaces sheer common sense!

RISK ASSESSMENT

How do I complete a risk assessment form?

Identifying a full list of risks will be difficult because you are not a British tourist and do not think like them. Tour operators and ground handlers understand that. At this stage, you only need to show that you can identify, assess and find solutions to the main risks of your excursion (start with three for each activity).

Name of Assessor:	Date of Assessment	Signature:
--------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------

Site description	Activity	List of risks to tourists	Risk level			Precautions in place to avoid risks
			Low	Medium	High	
Low altitude mountains/ clear footpaths/highly slippery in some places	Nature walk to learn about medicinal plants	Tripping or falling over on path			x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to tourists at the start of the excursion about path conditions • Warn tourists before encountering each hazard • Check all tourists have appropriate footwear • Have spare walking sticks • Check weather forecast (e.g. rain, fog)
Kitchen in private home	Cooking lesson	Burns and cuts when cooking		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run through H&S issues in kitchen with tourists • Chef/cook only person allowed to handle very hot dishes • Provision of kitchen gloves or equivalent
Flat but uneven country roads and paths	Bicycle ride	Accident (road and personal injury)	x			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide helmets • Start the excursion with a road safety briefing (e.g. driving side, how to signal, how to stop and where) • Explain how the bicycle works (e.g. breaks, lights) • Explain the route and its conditions (e.g. pot holes, uneven surfaces)

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN STAGE 2?

Read this customer comment shown on Trip Advisor, a website where many UK holidaymakers write bad and good comments about their holidays (this includes hotels, restaurants, excursions etc.). Make a list of all the things that went wrong AND explain what should have been done to ensure these tourists' safety.

"Dangerous excursions poorly equipped"

●●○○○○ Reviewed 18 February 2013

We recently hired this company to take us to the hot springs. While we were picked up by a sweet young tour guide with whom we bonded very quickly, we were never advised to prepare for bad weather and the possibility that we could be trapped in the mountains. The facilities at the springs were completely filthy. The company had not checked the weather which turned out to deliver heavy rains higher in the Andes precipitating mudslides. 7 in all. We left the mountains in sandals, t-shirts and shorts with our towels for warmth. The guide had no cell service or satellite phone to call for help. There was no first aid or extra supplies in the vehicle. Our guide, merely 24 years old was totally out of her element, no fault of her own.

After 48 hours a rescue crew came. We later met the company owner on the drive out of the mountains, who was on her way to deliver food and hopefully retrieve her vehicle. While she expressed her concern, she also asked the gailing question, had we brought her cooler and picnic basket with us.

This lady, Suzy, appeared to be way too naive in my opinion not well equipped to be taking tourists into such a volatile location.

Even if the slide had not happened... the springs are not worth the 3 hour drive and are completely filthy.



To check your answer go to page 72

Now that you have completed this, take some time to think about what you have learned and how this will impact your business. You might want to complete more activities on **www.small-matters.net** in order to ensure you are fully prepared for the next stage.



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

a) Have you made a list of all the risks you could identify?

☐

My notes

Remember, you are not expected to be a H&S specialist and therefore should only concentrate on the most dangerous risks, which should be assessed differently for different types of tourists. Invite a staff member at the resort (Overseas Representatives are best because they sell excursions directly to tourists), a Tour Leader or a guide that deals with UK tourists to experience your excursion. Ask them for feedback. Another great way to gain a deeper understanding of H&S standards is to work in a hotel that has a contract with a UK tour operator (choose the type of hotel that caters for the type of tourists you wish to attract). This could also give you the opportunity to ask tourists about the types of experiences they would like to enjoy at your destination or during their holidays.

b) Have you researched cost and cover of public liability insurance?

☐

Only two of the tour operators interviewed for this book took this insurance on behalf of their excursion providers, when those could not afford it. Those ground handlers ready to help will be those that really want to work with small entrepreneurs.

c) Have you checked with the local community that they are happy to welcome tourists?

☐

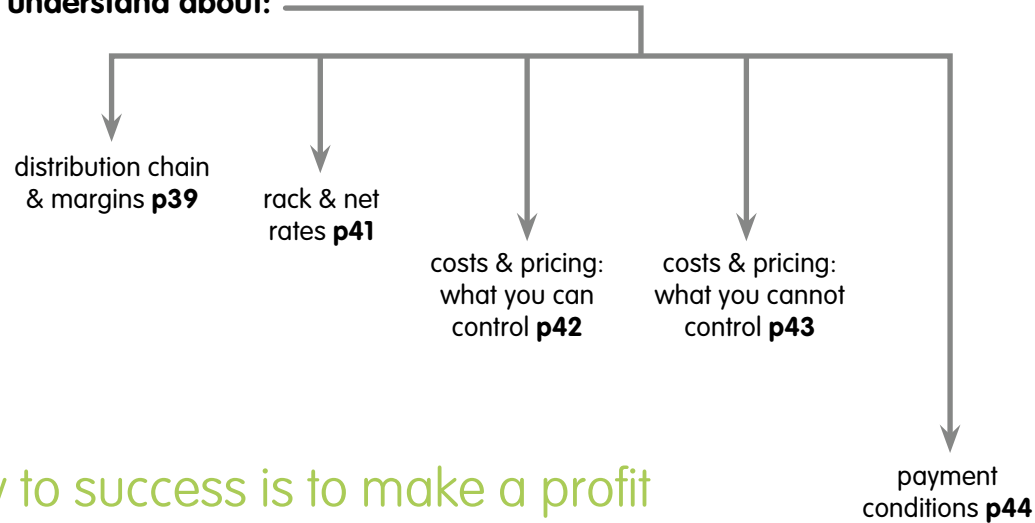
Remember, tourists need to feel welcome and safe, especially families, single female travellers or first time visitors. If they don't, they will write negative comments that everyone will see on the internet. Look at www.tripadvisor.co.uk, a very popular website specialising in publicising holiday complaints.



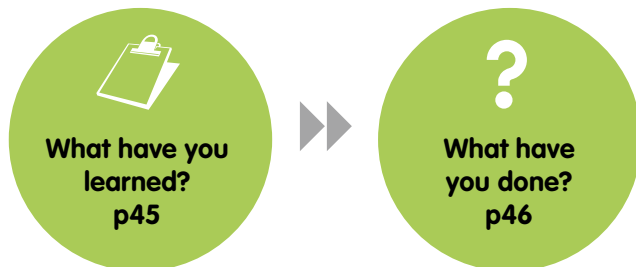
STAGE 3
PRICE THE
EXCURSION

STAGE 3 PRICE THE EXCURSION

You need to understand about:



The key to success is to make a profit whilst selling at an attractive price to the ground agent, the tour operator and the tourist.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

What matters most?

UK tour operators and their ground handlers want a price that is:

- **competitive:** UK tour operators will always compare your price to that of similar excursion providers to make sure you are not too expensive for their clients.
- **good value for money:** UK holidaymakers must think that their experience with you is worth every penny.
- **stable:** your price must be fixed for up to **one year** – that's why it is always best to give your price in US\$, £ or Euros.
- **profitable:** if your excursion is too cheap, many tour operators and ground handlers will not be able to make enough money to justify selling your tour.

What is a "good" price?

- 1) a price that enables you to **make a profit** to earn a decent living (as a main or additional income activity)
- 2) a price that is not too expensive if compared to your **competitors** UNLESS you offer something very unique AND can justify the higher price you charge.
- 3) a price holidaymakers are **willing to pay** because UK tourists are generally very price-conscious AND some tourists travel on a very limited budget. Remember about all-inclusive visitors?



Think
About It

If you need to give your price in a foreign currency, you will need to think about currency fluctuation. Do you realise that you will lose money if the exchange rate goes down? Make sure you plan for this.



Key Term

"Good value for money" can be interpreted differently by different people BUT as a rule, the more expensive an excursion, the more tourists will expect from you in terms of what is included, your level of expertise and your ability to deliver excellent customer service. If your excursion does not include food, transport, expert guiding or expensive activities, it will have to be cheaper. Ground handlers will also compare your price to other excursions and if you are more expensive, they will think you do not offer good value for money UNLESS you offer something that justifies a higher price (see below).



Helpful Tips

Tour operators and ground handlers are less likely to ask you to lower your overall price if they know part of the money goes to the community (e.g. donation, fund, payment to families or local artisans). You must provide transparent costing to show this (see page 35), supported by evidence.



Helpful Tips

Talk to tourists: explain about your excursion, what it includes, where it is located AND find out what they would be willing to pay for this experience. Hotels and ground handlers might help you organise this.

DISTRIBUTION CHAIN & MARGINS

How does it work?

The tour operator, the ground handler and YOU form a **distribution chain**. You must all make a profit out of selling the excursion which is why each of you will add a **mark-up** on top of the excursion price. Your mark-up will often be lower than that of the ground handler and the tour operator.

What if I am asked to reduce my mark-up?

You will always be asked to lower your mark-up BUT **never** agree to sell at a loss OR earn so little that you cannot cover your costs. Mass-market and small group adventure tour operators are more price-sensitive than tailor-made tour operators. They will first put pressure on the ground handler to lower its own mark-up. Some ground handlers will try their best to do this BUT others won't and you will be expected to reduce your own profit. It might seem unfair and unfortunately, it could make it difficult for your business to survive BUT that's the way things work.

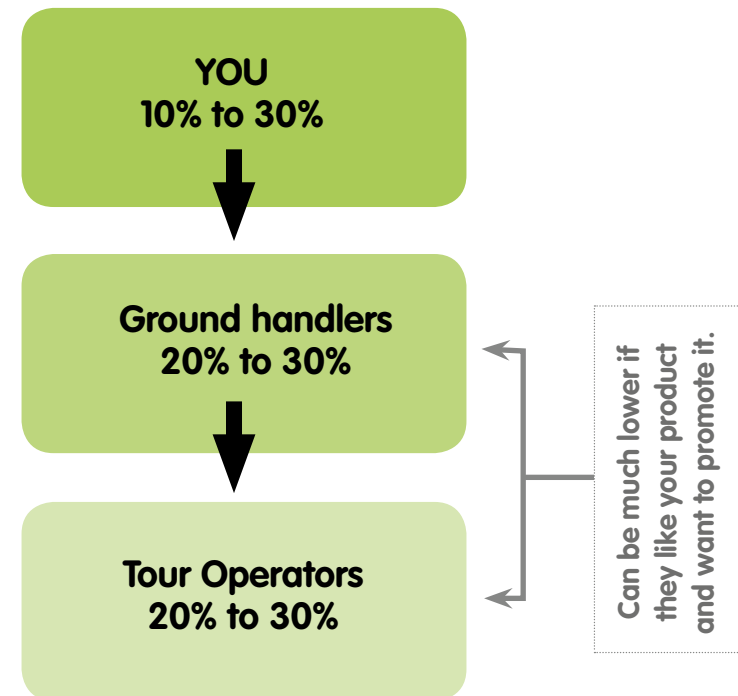
How do I negotiate prices?

The best way is to come to the meeting with a **transparent list** of all your costs. As we saw in Stage 2, ground handlers often have their own transport but also guides – these can be cheaper than yours and would reduce the overall price. The list should enable you to show:

- which elements cannot change, and that helps you
- that you have been very careful and your price will not drastically increase after a year (remember, that includes planning for currency fluctuations as seen on p38)

During your negotiation, you might hear the ground handler or the tour operator referring to their "commission rate". If this happens, please ask them to explain what this means and how this affects your business.

Distribution chain and mark-up levels



Think
About It

If your price is too expensive, what will you do? Instead of automatically reducing your mark-up, why not see if you can negotiate with the ground handler or maybe, you could change some of the content of the excursion to bring the cost down? Just ensure this does not affect the quality and the uniqueness of your product.

You will always be asked to lower your mark-up BUT never agree to sell at a loss OR earn so little that you cannot cover your costs.



RACK & NET RATES

What matters most?

If a client books directly with you, your **rack rate** cannot be cheaper than the price advertised by the ground handler for that same excursion – that would be unfair competition. Your **net rate** must allow the ground handler to add his own mark-up. In most cases ground handlers will check your website and other marketing material to ensure your price and their price are the same.



Key Term

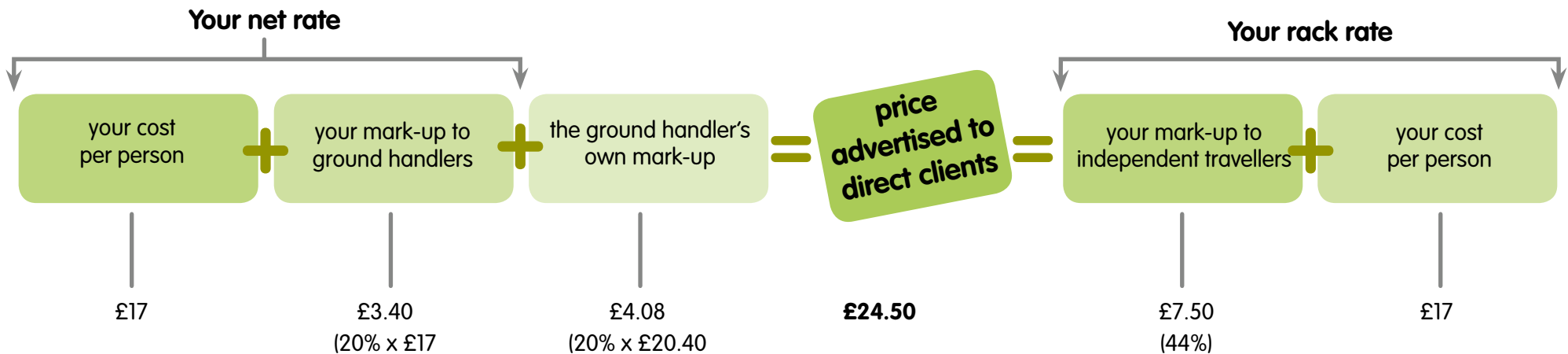
A “**rack rate**” refers to the price you charge to direct customers. A “**net rate**” is the price you will retail to ground handlers who will then add on their own mark-up.’



Helpful Tips

Provide prices that match the capacity of each type of tour operator:

- tailor-made: 1 to 5 people
- activity/adventure: 1 to 18 people
- mass-market: groups of 25 to 50 people



COSTS & PRICING: WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

How do I cost transparently?

List all the costs involved in running an excursion, making sure that it enables you to make enough profit to save money BECAUSE you always need to have access to **cash** in case you do not sell enough excursions OR need to invest in new equipment/repairs.

STEP 1 - Write down your monthly **fixed** spending on:

Office	rent	
	mobile phone & internet	+
	electricity/water/gas	+
	stationery	+
		=
Transport	maintenance	+
	insurance	+
		=
Salary	yours	
	other staff	+
		=
Other	public liability insurance	
	taxes	+
	bank charges	+
	loan repayment	+
		=

TOTAL A (add all grey boxes together) =

STEP 2 - Write down your **fixed** cost for running one excursion:

Transport	rental (e.g. car, minibus, coach)	
	fuel	+
	driver	+
		=
Activities (e.g. meals, entrance fees)		=
Translator/guide		=
Community	Donations to projects	
	payments to local participants	+
		=

TOTAL B (add all grey boxes together) =

STEP 3 Make some important decisions about the logistics of your excursion:

Question 1 How many excursions can you run each month? = **C**

Question 2 How many people can you take on your excursion = **D**

STEP 4 Calculate the fixed minimum cost of your excursion for one person:

1. divide A by C 2. add B 3. divide total by D

COSTS & PRICING: WHAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL

Because you are reliant upon the tour operator and the ground handler to sell your excursion, you should think about these 2 questions:

1. What if not enough tourists make a booking?

This is very likely to happen during your first year in business. However you must **make enough money to earn a decent living**.

What should you do?

Calculate the cost of your excursion on the basis that you will only attract half of your maximum capacity. If you do not reach that number, cancel the excursion.

2. What if the number of tourist arrivals varies during the year?

You must estimate the number of excursions you can run based on seasonal variations in arrival numbers.

How can you do that?

- research how many people arrive at your destination each month
- observe how many people go on excursions: look at the number of coaches you see around, the number of tourists on tours with guides
- ask ground handlers if they can help you with predicting sales

Why are these questions relevant to ground handlers?

If you offer **group excursions** and are using transport provided by ground handlers, they will cancel the excursion if not enough clients make a booking.

You will only get 12 hours notice and have no say in that decision.

Tour operators are looking for consistency and want to ensure that you can **run your excursion in low season** if practical.

To attract more clients to a destination in low season, tour operators often reduce their prices – they could ask you to be **cheaper in low season**



Selling excursions can be a very risky business. You might need to think of other ways to earn an income (e.g. another job) to survive during the low season and throughout your first year in business. Taking a loan is another option but it can be expensive. **Are you ready to take that risk?**

PAYMENT CONDITIONS

How will I be paid?

It really depends on how many excursions you sell AND how long you have been working with the ground handler. At the start, you might be paid cash BUT as your relationship strengthens and you receive more clients, you will be paid by bank transfer. Tour operators and ground handlers only do business with companies that have a bank account and are fully legitimate.

When will I get paid?

You can be paid:

- before the excursion takes place: this is usually the case with smaller tour operators and ground handlers that specialise in tailor-made holidays
- on the day the excursion takes place: this is very rare
- after the excursion takes place: that is the most common agreement and the rule is to pay within a 30-day period.



Jo says: "Agree on payment time and conditions with the ground handler BEFORE taking any bookings. It is unlikely that you will be paid on the day or shortly after. Don't forget to check the ground handler's policy on how refunds are dealt with, and ensure you have put money aside in case there are complaints. I suggest that you agree on a way to record the number of tourists each time you run an excursion so you can check your invoices match with those of the ground handler".



Think
About It

If you only get paid after a month, **do you have enough cash to make ends meet and to run other excursions?** What if you suddenly need to invest in transport maintenance or something happens at home that you need money for (e.g. illness)? It is essential that you save as much money as you can to ensure you run your excursion when agreed. **If you cancel an excursion once because you do not have money to run that excursion, ground handlers will not want to work with you again**



Journey Latin America understands that small companies do not have much cash. David explains: "We pay up to one month before the trip takes place but that only happens with companies we know well and trust". We will always ask about **cancellation conditions** when we write a contract so it is a good idea to think about those before you meet with a ground handler"



Be Better

If you give money to a community ensure that it is distributed fairly to all the individuals involved in dealing with the tourists. Some tour operators make this a requirement for working with them.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN STAGE 3?

Question 1 - Using the figures indicated on this sheet, calculate TOTAL A, TOTAL B and the fixed minimum cost of your excursion for one person.

STEP 1 - Write down your monthly **fixed** spending on:

Office	rent	£60	
	mobile phone & internet	+ £20	
	electricity/water/gas	+ £20	
	stationery	+ £10	
		=	£
Transport	maintenance	+ n/a	
	insurance	+ n/a	
		=	£
Salary	yours	£500	
	other staff	+ n/a	
		=	£
Other	public liability insurance	+ £360	
	taxes	+ £120	
	bank charges	+ n/a	
	loan repayment	+ n/a	
		=	£
TOTAL A (add all grey boxes together)		=	£

STEP 2 - Write down your **fixed** cost for running one excursion:

Transport	rental	£50	
	fuel	+ £20	
	driver	+ £15	
		=	£
Activities (e.g. meals, entrance fees)		=	£5
Translator/guide		=	£25
Community	Donations to projects	+ £5	
	payments to local participants	+ £15	
		=	£
TOTAL B (add all grey boxes together)		=	£

To check your answer go to page 73

Now that you have completed this, take some time to think about what you have learned and how this will impact your business. You might want to complete more activities on **www.small-matters.net** in order to ensure you are fully prepared for the next stage.

STEP 3 Make some important decisions about the logistics of your excursion:

Question 1 How many excursions can you run each month? = **8** **C**

Question 2 How many people can you take on your excursion = **10** **D**

STEP 4 Calculate the fixed minimum cost of your excursion for one person:

1. divide A by C = £ 2. add B = £ 3. divide total by D = £

Agree on payment time and
conditions with the ground handler
before taking any bookings



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

a) Have you completed the transparent cost list and added any other cost that is not already listed?

☐

Have you researched each item thoroughly and are you sure of your figures? You cannot realise after 6 months that you have made a mistake. That would be a disaster because the ground handler would not allow you to increase your price.

b) Have you made a realistic decision about the number of tours and the number of tourists you know (not think) you can handle?

☐

You might be attracted by the possibility of making good money by wanting to design an excursion for mass-market tourists but do you have enough staff, and cash to pay them, to handle large groups?

c) Have you researched tourist arrival number per season and taken this into consideration when pricing?

☐

Remember, it is very unlikely that your sales will be constant throughout the year and you need to ensure that you can earn a living in low season. Talk to a ground handler or the tourist information office to find out more about these numbers.

d) Have you calculated your potential profit with a mark-up of 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25% and 30%?

☐

You need to think about every eventuality if you are asked to reduce your price. Having these figures enables you to show the ground handler why you cannot go below a certain rate.

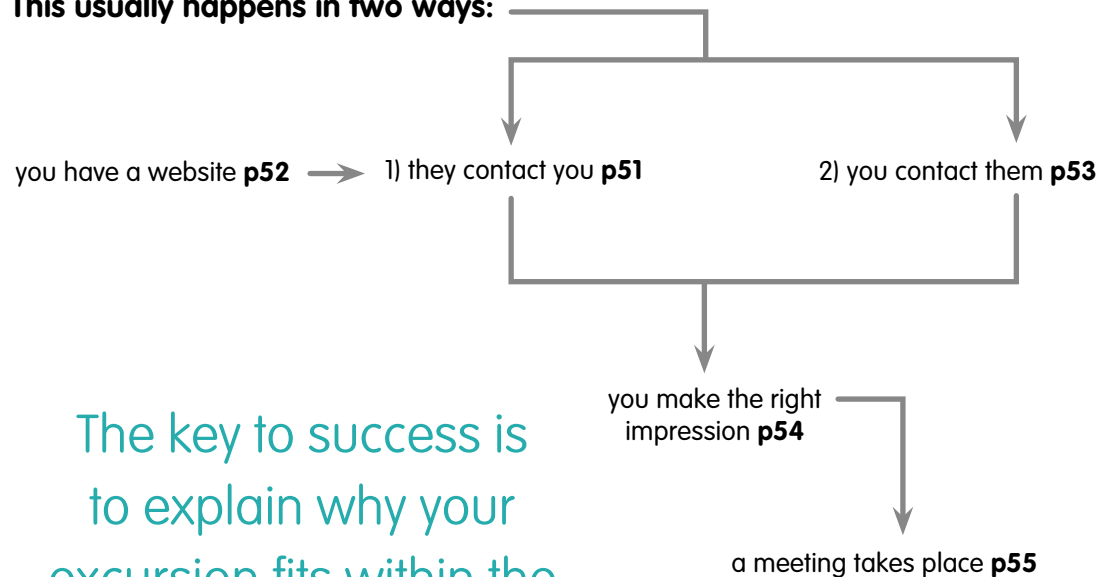
My notes



STAGE 4 START WORKING WITH TOUR OPERATORS

STAGE 4 START WORKING WITH TOUR OPERATORS

This usually happens in two ways:



The key to success is to explain why your excursion fits within the tour operator's existing activities.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

How does it work?

Few tour operators will contact you directly to discuss and agree the activities and itinerary of your excursion. They will ask their **ground handler/agent** to deal with all the operational details.

How much help can I expect?

Tour operators and ground handlers are **very busy people** and will have **little time to help** you. Some ground agents offer training and take more time to help you but they are a minority. Of course, it is much better if you can find such an agent; some can also lend you money but you will have to pay it back and really show that you deserve that chance!

What matters most?

UK tour operators and their ground handlers look for individuals that can take lots of **initiative**. They want to work with people that are really **dynamic** and **like a challenge**.

What do I need?

You must have a **phone**, a computer, or daily access to a **computer**. To please their customers, UK tour operators and ground agents need to answer queries very quickly (usually within 48 hours) so you need to be quick too! They all want immediate action.



Helpful Tips

UK tour operators put a lot of trust in their ground agents because they act as guardian of a tour operator's excellent reputation with tourists. Consequently, ground agents need to be able to **trust** you too.



Jane has provided training and financial support to develop a village tour. The loan is paid back through collecting money from all the ticket sales. She says: "Be sure you have enough money saved to live on until the loan is fully repaid".



Our **second expert**, Hannelie du Toit, Manager in Market Access for TEP, an organisation developing small tourism businesses, explains: "During the training we provide to small entrepreneurs in South

Africa, we spend a lot of time working on developing the type of 'soft skills' necessary to working with foreign companies (e.g. communication, creativity, entrepreneurship, customer service, etc.). I know that this really makes a big difference".



Helpful Tips

Your phone must be charged and be with you at all times. You should have enough sim cards to be reached everywhere you go. Invest in a solar battery if electricity supply is a problem. You can share the cost with neighbours or other businesses.

THEY CONTACT YOU

Who will contact me and why?

Most of the time, the ground handler will phone you for two reasons: they have been asked by the tour operator to find a **specific activity** OR they are looking for **something new** that will make their company more competitive. They are much more likely to contact you if you offer an excursion that no one else offers in your area. They will question you about your excursion and may ask you to make several changes to meet the needs of their foreign clients.

How do I make myself known?

Most UK tour operators and their ground agents expect you to have a small **website** that gives information about your company and excursions. It makes you look more professional. Some ground agents will spend hours searching for excursions on the internet. They will also use your website to promote your excursion to UK tour operators.

A cheap and very effective way is to ask people from the tourism industry to recommend you – UK tour operators and ground agents will only work with you if you have an **excellent reputation**.



Helpful Tips

Contact popular local hotels, travel agencies and guides and invite them to experience your excursion for free. If they like you and your excursion, they will take the initiative to recommend you.



Helpful Tips

- Always return phone calls within 24 hours maximum. Taking more time shows that you do not care.
- Write down the changes you are asked to make and email this list back to the ground agent to check you have not forgotten anything.



These two ground handlers located in Latin America always seek feedback from their local partners (hotels, travel agents, guides and other activity providers) before they contact a new excursion provider. They must be able to trust that your company can meet the high expectations of UK tour operators and their clients.



Helpful Tips

Sometimes, Tour Leaders will hear about you and decide to try your excursion with a group of tourists to see if they like it and if they should recommend you to the tour operator. Ensure that you make the most of this opportunity.

YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is very important and is your door to the rest of the world. If you have very little money, design something very simple showing the following essential information.

- ☐ **you and what you are trying to achieve with your excursion**
- ☐ **the experiences included as part of your tour: a maximum of 5 bullet points will do**
- ☐ **the selling price to independent clients**
- ☐ **pictures of the activities, the surrounding environment, the community involved and tourists**
- ☐ **a map showing your location and details about accessibility**
- ☐ **your contact details**



Helpful Tips

Designing a website yourself can be very scary. If you can, find someone who can help you. The cheapest option will be to work with students learning about computer technology. HOWEVER, there are also what we call "website builders" where you can create your own site for free, using one of the many templates available. These are great if you need a bit of inspiration and cannot afford to pay someone to help you. Some very well-known names include wix.com, godaddy.com or 123-reg.co.uk.



YOU CONTACT THEM

Who do I contact?

There are two options: UK tour operators will want to talk to you directly OR they will expect you to contact their ground agent. Only talk to the person responsible for selecting excursions - it is **your responsibility** to find out their name and email address.

What do I do?

Either way, you need to write a detailed **description of your excursion**, save it as a word document, and send it as an email attachment to the right person.

What information do I include?

- 1) a short description of you and your business
- 2) a short description of the excursion and its overall purpose
- 3) a map of the region locating your excursion
- 4) pictures of the excursion (e.g. tourists, landscape, transport, community, guide)
- 5) information about accessibility (distance, flying/driving time from capital city or tourist resort)
- 6) times and location of departure/arrival
- 7) precise duration of excursion, and of each activity
- 8) for physical activities, distances and level of difficulty
- 9) net& rack rates, costs
- 10) a short list of some of the risks involved and what you have done to minimise them
- 11) details of insurance
- 12) your website address & contact details



Helpful Tips

Names can be found on the website of the tour operator in the section "about us". Look for the following job titles: "Country Specialist", "Product Manager" or "Product Director". Send them an email to find out who it is best to talk to.



John Telfer
Products & Operations
Director

EXPLORE!

John gives the following very practical advice:

- The email should be written in **formal English**, without mistakes. Address the email to the right person. This shows that you have done the necessary research to find out about the company.

Write: "Dear John" or "Dear Mr Telfer"

- You should always start by explaining WHY you think your excursion should be sold.

Write: "I have looked at your tours and I think that my excursion could add to your portfolio by offering...." and "I have researched the motivations of your clients and I know that they like....".



Be Better

To increase your chances, explain how you contribute to helping the community where your excursion takes place.

MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION

Most of the people who work for UK tour operators OR for ground agents dealing with UK tour operators will be foreign (e.g. British, American, Swiss etc.). They might live or have experience of living in your country, and understand your culture BUT when it comes to business they want YOU to show specific **skills AND qualities**:



Key Term

SOME KEY WORDS

Enthusiastic

If you do not believe in your excursion, who will? Enthusiasm is contagious and shows a **positive attitude**. If you are guiding and looking after tourists, tour operators will expect you to show enthusiasm.

Literate & numerate

Each document you send must show a **high standard of English**. You need to have excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is because you will be interacting with native English speakers. Your figures must be exact and presented clearly (remember p42?).

Open to change

Your excursion proposal is unlikely to be perfect. Because UK tour operators and their clients have demanding requirements, you must accept that **changes will be made**. Show you can listen.



Entrepreneurial

Competition amongst excursion providers is very high. This is why UK tour operators and ground agents will only work with individuals that **get things done**. Come up with new ideas and ways to solve problems. Don't be afraid to talk to people when you need to find out information.

Trustworthy & honest

If the tour operator trusts the ground handler THEN the ground handler needs to trust that you will **keep your word**. Do all the things you have promised you will do.

THE MEETING

Where will it take place?

You are generally expected to **visit the ground handler's office**. Someone from the UK tour operator's head office might visit you on location but only when all the details are arranged and the ground handler is happy to recommend you.

What is it about?

A meeting has 5 objectives:

1. to get to **know you as a person** – a lot of business in the T&T industry relies on people liking you and what you are about.
2. to agree on some **practical details**, including the best day to run your excursion, when it will be included in tour operators' brochures or how the excursion could be promoted (e.g. at the World Travel Market (WTM) or other trade fairs).
3. to assess if you are **ready to do business** with a UK tour operator. This will be achieved by organising a **test run** of your excursion to check on H&S, the quality of GUIDING and of the whole EXPERIENCE (see Stage 5).
4. to set minimum **communication standards**
5. to agree **financial terms**: PAYMENT conditions, PRICING and COMMISSION levels



Think
About It

This is **YOUR** excursion so who should pay for the test run? **YOU!** You need to budget enough money to be able to invite the ground handler and their guests to experience your excursion for free.

What do I need to bring?

- a printed copy of all the information listed on p42 AND all official documents about your bank account, insurance, business registration, licences, ALL neatly arranged in a **folder**
- a pen and a work-book to **take notes** during the meeting



Helpful Tips

Make the right impression and be on time, look professional (clean and smartly dressed) and show impeccable manners.



Jo insists on the fact that **TIMING** can be crucial: "We need time to design and print promotional material for your excursion so it's best to sign your contract with the ground handler well before the season starts. If tourists only visit from May to July and you start planning in March you'll be too late and will need to wait another year until tourists come back. Choosing the right day to schedule your excursion is also important. Try to avoid key arrival and departure days as this will limit the number of tourists you can attract".



Helpful Tips

If before the meeting, you did not make the changes you were asked for, tell the ground agent at once, don't make excuses, and seek advice. They will help.



Be Better

You will make an excellent impression if you bring:

- a completed risk assessment form
- pictures of events that you have organised in your community
- testimonials of foreign clients on your tour
- local newspaper articles

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN STAGE 4?

Answer YES or NO to the following statements:

	Yes	No
a) Having a website increases your chances of being contacted by a tour operator or ground handler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Ground handlers have very limited time available to spend helping you design an excursion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Answering an email or phone call within 48 hours is OK because of the time difference with the UK.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Finding out the name of the person responsible for sourcing/contracting excursion is not that essential because the email will always be forwarded to that person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Ground handlers understand that not all the changes they ask for can be implemented because it takes time to make things happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To check your answer go to page 73

Now that you have completed this, take some time to think about what you have learned and how this will impact your business. You might want to complete more activities on **www.small-matters.net** in order to ensure you are fully prepared for the next stage.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

a) Have you found out the name of the person you need to write to? Do you have their correct job title?

☐

Remember that having a proper name and correct job title shows that you have made a real effort to act as a pro-active manager. It's all about the personal touch!

b) Have you set up your own website?

☐

This manual does not provide practical guidance to help you set up a website BUT often international AID agencies and governments run programmes to teach computer skills to small entrepreneurs. Find out if these are available in your country.

c) Have you checked the spelling, punctuation and grammar of your documentation?

☐

First impressions matter. If your English is not good enough, how will you convince the tour operator or ground handler that you will understand all their requirements and can communicate with their clients when on your excursion?

d) Have you explained WHY & HOW your excursion fits in the itineraries or tours already offered by the tour operator in your area or country?

☐

Remember, it's all about matching the tour operator's philosophy, activities and clients' motivations for travel to your destination. Nothing matters more than that!

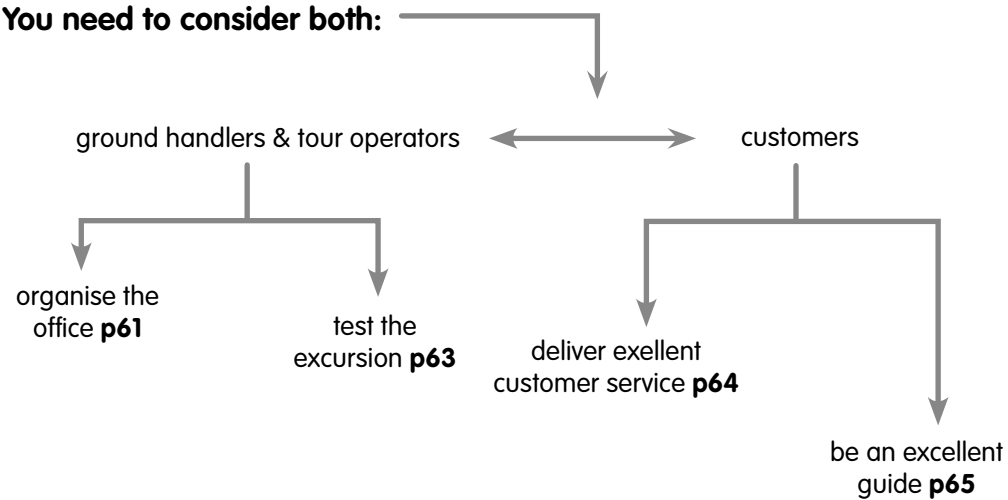
My notes



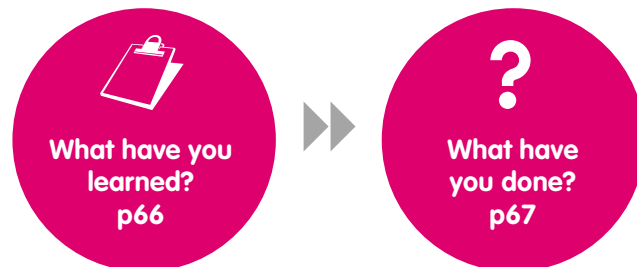
STAGE 5
DELIVER
EXCELLENT
CUSTOMER
SERVICE

STAGE 5 DELIVER EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

You need to consider both:



The key to success lies in offering excellent service at all times.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

Now that you have had your meeting, the ground handler or tour operator will test you to find out if you can handle the pressure of working with a foreign company. This is a very important stage as it is all about proving that you can be trusted.

How long can this take?

As a new provider, it might take **up to one year** to become a regular supplier. This is because many new businesses go bankrupt in their first year of business OR are unable to show that they can deliver excellent service at all times.

What matters most?

You must be **consistent** with the **quality** of the equipment, transport, customer service, food, experience and guiding you offer on your excursion. Clients must be given what they have been promised and have paid for. All tour operators ask their clients to complete a feedback form to comment and rate their experiences; if they hear that something was not up to standard, they will contact the ground handler, which will investigate the issue. The ground handler might decide to stop working with you until you can demonstrate that you have resolved the issue.

CONSISTENCY = TRUST



These three companies have published their own manual to explain to all their suppliers what quality and consistency mean to their clients and their company. They get a lot of repeat business because their clients trust them to provide enjoyable and safe holidays, wherever they travel. They send emails to tourists to find out what they liked best on their trip. Exodus also asks their Tour Leaders to provide feedback on activities and excursions.



Our **third expert**, James Crockett, is English but lives in the Caribbean, where he runs a company offering a very unique sailing experience on board an old traditionally-built boat. He goes to places other boats don't go and serves delicious local food and drinks. He explains that although he had all the H&S paperwork required and the ground handlers loved his excursion, it took up 14 months to sign a deal with a UK tour operator. This is because it takes time to develop business relationships, especially if you are a brand new supplier. Ground handlers are also very busy. Therefore you must be **patient** and **persevere**. Thankfully, he was getting enough bookings from independent travellers to sustain his business.

ORGANISING THE OFFICE

Bookings and queries

Unless you live in an area without internet access AND offer a really fantastic and unique excursion, confirmation of bookings and itinerary/activities will only be accepted through **email**. This is because a written agreement sets out clearly all that is expected, and cannot be disputed. It's all about making sure that everyone knows what they have to do to make the tourists happy.

Tour operators expect ground handlers to respond to their email within 24 hours. This means that you must answer your emails and phone calls **on the day** you receive them. You need to give ground handlers enough time to write their own answers. That includes weekends as your excursion might be scheduled on a Saturday or Sunday.

Staff

Who answers the phone when you are out guiding the tourists or sorting out the last details of the excursion? A major problem that UK tour operators and ground handlers have with small businesses is that usually one person tries to do everything. This does NOT work. What happens if you are sick or have a family engagement? You need to **work with at least one other person** that knows as much about your excursion as you do, and can replace you and help you when needed.

This is especially important when it comes to **guiding**. Tour operators complain most when the usual guide is replaced by someone else who is not good enough. They would rather cancel the excursion than disappoint their clients.



"It's good practice to confirm customer numbers with the ground agent 48 hours before the excursion takes place. This gives you a chance to get fully prepared and shows the ground agent that you are organised in your business. If you don't have a computer and you get poor phone coverage, go to an internet café every day to check messages. All calls should be made by the same person because ground handlers like to work with one person they can get to know well. Remember, it's all about showing consistency so ground handlers trust you and enjoy working with you".



These two companies have strict contracts that name two guides for each excursion. If another substitute guide is sent without their agreement first, they will terminate their contract with the excursion provider.

The quality of your guide can make the difference between a good trip and an outstanding one



TESTING THE EXCURSION

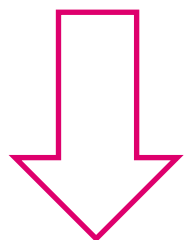
How does it work?

In your meeting with the ground handler, you should have agreed a date and a number of participants for your test run.

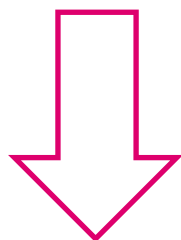
Remember that you need to **pay for this** so you might need to speak to your partners (e.g. restaurant, local guide, transport provider) to see how they can help you share the cost.

What should I do?

You must follow your excursion description to the letter: keep to times, what is included, agreed standard of transport and equipment. Last minute changes are not a good idea but if they are necessary, ensure the ground handler knows about it BEFORE the test run (i.e. phone, send email).



Deliver **excellent customer service** see p64



Be an **excellent guide** see p65

What will happen?

The ground handler will check on H&S, your guiding style and the whole experience. You are not expected to get everything right and will receive feedback to make things better. If they think you can be trusted to make the changes they recommend, they will start sending small groups of clients to see what happens. If clients are happy, they will start working with you more.



Helpful Tips

Ensure you know the name and the job title of the people coming. This will help you be more confident on the day.



Beth says: "If I am told that the excursion includes a 2 hour cycle ride, I do not want my clients to spend the first 30 minutes of their day waiting around for their equipment – it should all be ready and take only 5 minutes. The ride must last the full 2 hours and if you are doing another activity afterwards, someone else must put all the bikes and helmets away – again, tourists cannot be waiting around for you to do this yourself".



"At Audley Travel, our customers speak to Country Specialists who know everything about the destinations they sell holidays to. Whilst ground handlers run all the local H&S checks, each year our Country Specialists visit their destinations to assess the overall quality of the excursion (H&S too). If they are happy, they will confidently recommend your product to their customers".



DELIVER EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

What is this about?

Being nice, smiling, helpful and welcoming is not enough anymore. UK tour operators expect more:

- 1) **Can you guess what tourists want before being asked?** e.g. Do your clients look tired, which means they need a break?
- 2) **Do you understand that different types of tourists need to be treated in different ways?** e.g. How can you keep children interested and engaged?
- 3) **Are you paying attention to detail?** Are there ways you can make your experience more comfortable and memorable by including extra services that cost little money?
- 4) **Can you solve problems?** If things don't go according to plan, can you quickly find a solution that will not disappoint your clients?

How should I behave with tourists?

- Give **information** – explain your excursion in detail and give information about cultural dos and don'ts
- Be **friendly** BUT **formal** – your clients are not your friends
- Always offer to **help** without expecting anything in return
- Find out about your clients' lives, hobbies and interests – it helps start a **conversation** and shows you care
- Be totally **focussed** - do not get distracted by your phone or other people when you are working
- Respect the **environment** – do not throw rubbish on the floor or make noise in peaceful settings



Think
About It

Are you being consistent? You might have problems at home or with your business but these cannot affect the quality of your service.



Thomas insists: "Small details matter to tourists and make a big difference. When it gets really hot, carry cold and wet small towels in a rucksack. Give them to tourists just before they start lunch so they can refresh themselves. If the restaurant where you stop does not have table cloths, bring your own".



Helpful Tips

The Travel Foundation's 'Greener Excursion' tool includes a section on how to communicate with customers about local customs and cultures, the natural environment and local communities in an engaging way www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/green_business_tools/greener_excursions/communication1/customers1



In his handbook, Gavin gives practical tips on how to look after clients properly: "When the clients arrive, everything should be prepared. Some clients might be worried about being in a different country, away from home and family so they will be very happy if you are friendly and talk to them individually as well as when they are all in a group.

Be professional at all times: you should not drink alcohol, smoke in front of the clients or encourage any romantic interests; you should not swear, fart, burp, spit or pick your nose in front of clients. Always have clean hands, nails and clothes. Be polite and use good manners but if the client does something wrong, always tell them (in a nice way providing an explanation). Remember that if the clients are young people, they may act differently to adults".

EXODUS CUSTOMER CHARTER

We promise to...

- Deliver the holiday we said we would; we will meet or exceed your expectations

BE AN EXCELLENT GUIDE

What do I need to know first?

In **cultural destinations**, many UK tour operators employ non-qualified guides because the majority of British travellers are not that keen on history. They prefer to learn about people's lives and culture.

In **natural destinations**, guides must know about wildlife and the environment. Experts can be hired especially on that occasion but this is costly.



Klaudija makes an interesting point: "In developing countries where there is legislation about guiding licences, we have a problem because guides are too academic and not interested in telling about the local culture and life".

What matters most?

You need to show that you:

- 1) speak very good **English**
- 2) have excellent local knowledge, which you can communicate through interesting **stories**
- 3) can explain your culture through **real life examples** (yours and other people in your community)
- 4) can **adapt your comments** to different types of audiences (e.g. children)
- 5) do not treat tourists like **walking dollars** – do not ask for tips or tell stories about how hard your life is to get money out of clients



Helpful Tips

Some tour operators and ground handlers run training programmes to upgrade your guiding skills. Attendance is compulsory and not remunerated.



Richard explains: "We look for guides that can explain about flora and fauna. We focus on language first as you cannot be a good guide if you cannot communicate. You don't need to be fluent but you must understand the words that express needs/likes/dislikes. You also need to know when to stop talking if tourists want peace and quiet. Guides should have an affinity with tourists and tell them stories relevant to the excursion".



Be Better

If you are visiting a food market, families, shopkeepers or artists, ensure that they have a voice and talk to tourists. Remember to pay them as they are helping you make your excursion more interesting.



The quality of your guide can make the difference between a good trip and an outstanding one. The guides we use have been picked by us or our local representatives as the best available and great care has been taken over their training. They provide more than just dates or names; they strive to offer a real insight into their country and region.



At Exodus, communication skills matters most: "Guides must understand their audience and find out what tourists want to hear about that day. They should not talk for 45 minutes about something tourists aren't interested in and only spend 5 minutes on something they want to know".

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED IN STAGE 5?

Task 1 – go to www.wanderlust.co.uk/magazine/awards/wanderlust-world-guide-awards and click on “Meet the Winners 2012”. Reading about the 3 winners, can you make a list of all the qualities UK tourists are looking for in a guide?



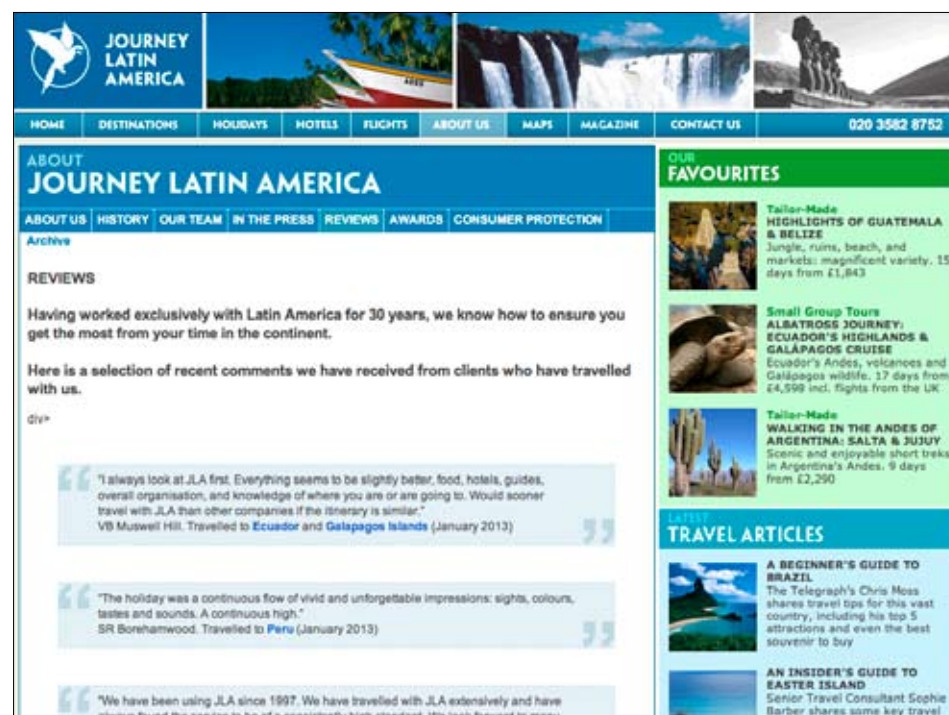
To check your answer go to page 73

Now that you have completed this, take some time to think about what you have learned and how this will impact your business. You might want to complete more activities on www.small-matters.net in order to ensure you are fully prepared for the next stage.

Task 2 – go to www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk/About-Us/Testimonials.aspx.

You will find tourists commenting on the customer service delivered by the company.

Can you define what excellent customer service and guiding means to these tourists?



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

a) Have you set up your office?

If you are short on money, you could work from home BUT you should ensure that you have space to organise all your folders, and a clear desk to work at with at least access to a phone that you will be the only one allowed to answer.

☐

My notes

b) Have you found a partner you can rely on?

This person should be trustworthy and as enthusiastic as you are. They will need to be trained in guiding your excursion in case you fall ill and should be able to deal with bookings too.

☐

c) Have you researched and chosen the stories you are going to tell your clients to give them an insight into your culture and the life of the communities?

Don't forget that you still need to be knowledgeable about the history, fauna and flora of your country or area to answer questions. You are not expected to know everything and it's perfectly acceptable to ask someone else for help.

☐

d) Have you been on excursions offered in your area?

It is important that you find out how other guides look after tourists. The best is to experience different types of tourists to see how customer service and guiding styles can differ. It is also a good idea to think about ways you can provide a better service than your competitors.

☐



TIPS

LAST MINUTE TIPS: TOUR OPERATORS



1. Always offer your best possible service to ensure excellent customer satisfaction
3. Learn about the **needs of the groups of tourists you want to attract**, especially regarding H&S



1. A good guide does not make a good excursion: before you do anything, find out what tourists want because it's all about content!
2. Collaborate with other people, get advice from tourism officials in your area
3. **Be proactive** and ask around for help



1. Have a clear idea of why a UK tour operator would want to work with you
2. Think about the **H&S requirements for UK holidaymakers** – what questions will tour operators ask?
3. Be flexible with the content of your excursion: accept suggestions if changes need to be made



1. Research the types of holidays already offered by the tour operator and offer **something different but complementary**
2. Work together with the communities you visit to ensure they are happy to receive tourists



1. You are only as good as your last mistake, so ensure your safety and customer service standards are excellent
2. Get **computer literate** to get access to the wider world
3. Respect the people and environment where you work
4. Enjoy your work every day: it should make you happy



1. Find out about the **Responsible Tourism standards** of the tour operator, and do everything you can to match them
2. Behave as an entrepreneur and take the initiative to find information yourself
3. Spend time on finding the right way to show the ground handler what your tour is about



1. Engage with clients and tour leaders to find out what they want to do on holiday
2. Have an excellent working relationship with ground handlers – they hold the power to recommend you to a UK operator
3. Ask yourself: **what are you trying to achieve?**



1. Research what we do: know something about us to ensure you don't try to offer something we already offer
2. Be innovative: **offer an insight into your country** as tourists now want to see how people live, visit cultural sites, try local food, hear music, go to festivals – offer the unexpected



1. Research what the **potential demand** might be
2. Create a robust business plan and build in contingency
3. Diversify: cater for different markets



1. Include well-known and unknown but safe sites on the itinerary
2. Give an opportunity to tourists to talk to local people
3. **Tell stories** about culture and every day life



1. Ensure your excursion is **accessible**
2. Make it unique and interesting
3. Design it to **fit into existing itineraries**



1. Ensure your excursion is **environmentally friendly**
2. Comply with all H&S requirements at all times
3. Be consistent with delivering a quality experience
4. **Provide evidence** to show the ground handler that you can do all the above



1. Speak to ground handlers and tourists BUT mostly, **observe the tourists** because this is the smartest way for small companies to understand what tourists from different nationalities want and how they behave
2. At least have **2 people involved** in your business, be available every day on the phone and get your office operations in order



1. Invite my clients and me to **try your excursion for free** – ensure you have budgeted for this
2. Get your **price structure** right and provide prices valid for up to 1 year
3. Reply to your emails on the same day



1. **Research the competition** and their products to make sure yours is different, unique and stands out
2. Have a **nice document to present your excursion**, with no spelling or grammatical errors – what you are trying to achieve must come across
3. Behave as a professional: your mobile must be charged at all times and you should answer emails to confirm bookings in writing



1. Come up with **something new and unique** as I would not change supplier on the basis of price alone
2. Research the travel motivations of UK travellers
3. Be professional when answering queries about the tour: **be available at all times**

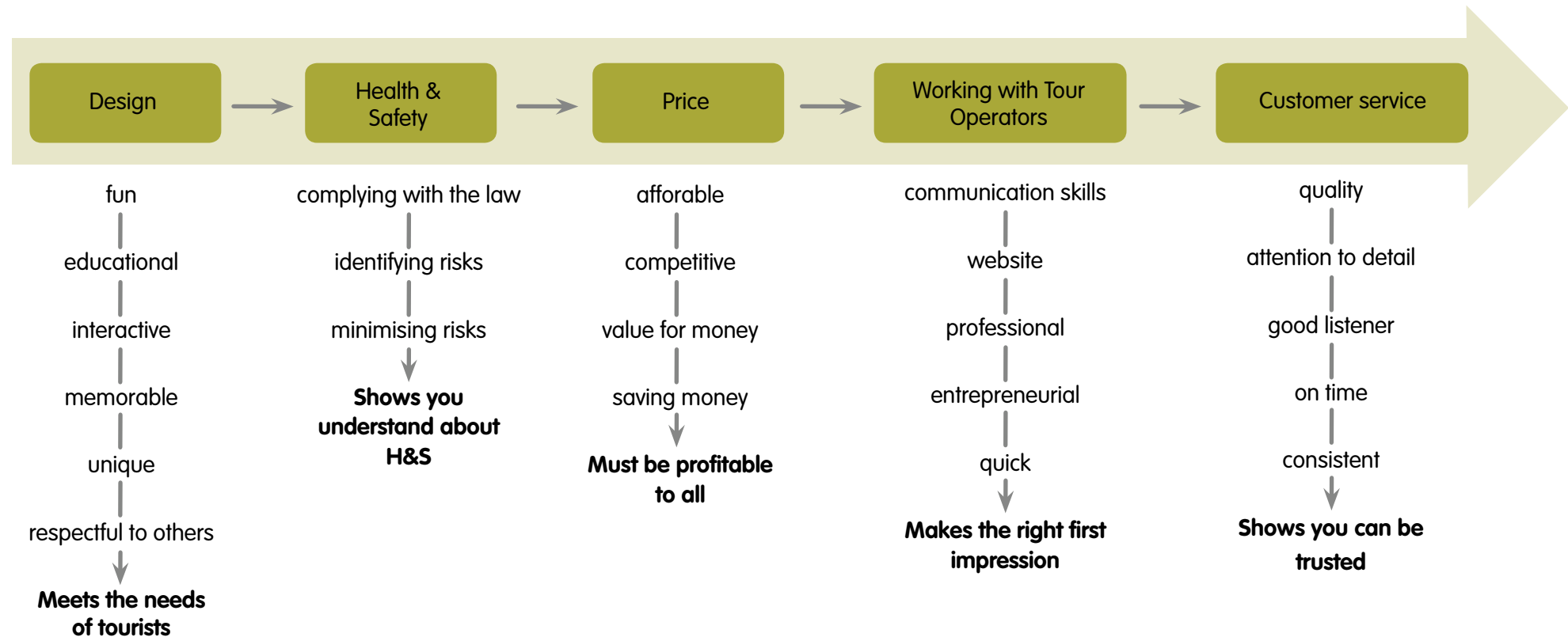
It's often the smallest things that make the biggest difference. And it doesn't have to cost a fortune to create a memorable experience



CONCLUSION

This aim of this manual was to provide you with as much knowledge as possible to help you sell your excursion to UK tour operators BUT most importantly, it was also to help you identify **which type of tour operator your excursion and business are best suited to.**

There are some important words you need to remember at all times; look at the arrow below – it summarises each chapter in key terms.



If you need more help with the manual, don't hesitate to contact the Travel Foundation or the author. Your feedback will always be welcomed. Finally don't forget: **a successful business is one that makes a profit AND respects the communities and the environment in the places where it operates. Good luck!**

ANSWERS TO LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Answers to Stage 1 – Designing an excursion - Page 20

1) the text: it tells us that tourists in small groups are more likely to make friends as they can get to know their guide and other tourists better. So, even if tourists choose to do something a bit adventurous, which they have never done before, they will feel safe because they will be with other people that are similar to them, and with a local guide, who we are told, is “experienced”. Tourists clearly want to learn because Audley writes about the guide having “in-depth knowledge”. One important point is that by being local, the guide will know about places that no one else knows and we have seen that some holidaymakers want to explore less touristic place to feel they have more “authentic” experiences. This is why Audley keeps group size to a maximum of 16 (smaller groups can get to places that larger groups cannot access). Another important point is that the guide is key to the quality of the holiday experience, to connecting the tourists to local people and to connecting the tourists to each other by helping them to become friends. Overall, quality is a key word and this is why Audley writes that group tourists will get the same excellent service as tailor-made tourists. Even group tourists need to feel special.

2) the image

The picture shows that tourists will take part in a tour that is led by a local guide. This means that they will be fully immersed in understanding how the plantation they are visiting is managed and how fruits and vegetables are grown. This is because they will be visiting the fields with their guide and see how hard everyone works. This will also help the tourists understand the life of local people at the destination. So, the picture shows that tourists will learn and interact with local residents, which is exactly what they want.

Answers to Stage 2 – Health & Safety - Page 34

1) Clients were never advised to prepare for bad weather (this means they were

inappropriately dressed and had not clothes/shoes to keep warm and dry); They did not know they ran the risk of being trapped in the mountain (it looks like they did not know about any risks at all); The facilities at the springs were filthy (UK tourists expect clean toilets and the springs to have no litter);

The excursion provider had not checked the weather (this means he/she was completely unprepared and could not inform the clients properly or deal with any risks adequately);

The guide had no means of communicating with head office or with any medical staff in case of accidents or injury (this is very unprofessional as it puts the life of other human beings unnecessarily in danger. The situation was made worse as there was no medical kit available, which is unacceptable, especially in mountainous areas;

The guide was clearly not trained to handle bad weather, emergency situation, and the clients being upset and fearful of what was going to happen. Her age should not have been an issue if she had been properly trained;

It took 48hrs to rescue the clients (what did they eat and drink during that time? why was the owner not aware that the clients were missing that night? no one seemed to be aware that the tourists were actually on the excursion);

Upon meeting the owner, she was more concerned about her car, her cool box and picnic basket than she was about her clients (paying more attention to material belongings than to human beings is totally unprofessional and shows she absolutely did not understand the seriousness of the situation);

2) The owner, together with the guide should have assessed the risks of the excursion by going on the excursion themselves with a group of people of different ages and different abilities (e.g. friends and family) to test the excursion. A risk assessment form should have been completed. The guide should have looked at the weather forecast, needed to contact the

clients, and explain that the excursion had to be cancelled. Money should have been refunded with an apology. Indeed, always be better safe than sorry.

Excellent customer service would have required from the owner or the guide to see if they could offer an alternative excursion for that day, even if it was with a competitor as the clients would probably have just postponed their day trip with them anyway. They would have appreciated this kind and caring gesture and may have written a comment on Trip Advisor to that effect.

Answers to Stage 3 – Costing and Pricing Exercise - Page 45

TOTAL A = £1,090 / TOTAL B = £135

STEP 4 - 1) £136.25 (1,090:8) 2) £271.25(136.25+135) 3) £27(271.25:10)

Answers to Stage 4 – Working with Tour Operators - Page 56

- a) Yes
- b) Yes
- c) No
- d) No
- e) No

Answers to Stage 5 – Internet Activities - Page 66

Task 1 – Wanderlust Award

Tourists expect their guide to be Superman or Wonder Woman! They look for someone who is charismatic, colourful and engaging. Although they like someone with a sense of humour, they still need to feel that guides are in control and do their job seriously. They want to be taken care of by a person who has a lot of personality and loves speaking to them about their life, and the life of other people at the destination. This makes the whole experience more “real” as tourists can then compare their life to that of the people they see and meet during their holidays. Below you will find a very thorough list

of skills and qualities demonstrated by the winners. Don’t forget that few of these skills and qualities matter if you don’t have a positive and welcoming attitude at work. Guides should:

1) Know their subject

Speak about the local culture and history, and arrange for tourists to meet and talk to local people. It is important that local people feel free to talk and ask questions to visitors too as this will make exchanging knowledge more “real” and interesting for all. For these kind of “authentic” interaction to happen, guides should be highly respected by members of the local communities they visit. In fact, guides should be considered as friends by these communities.

2) Guess what clients want without asking them first

A guide needs to be proactive and should think about what would make the clients happy and comfortable (as long as it is achievable and reasonable). This also includes being flexible as sometimes changes need to be made to the activities and adapted to the tourists and their needs; for example, the guide might have to shorten a walk because the clients are too young or too old to walk long distances.

3) Respect guests and do not treat them like walking dollars

It’s essential to be polite and not to address clients by their first name unless they have told you that this is what they wanted. Women deserve as much respect as men and should be looked after well, especially if they travel on their own. You also should know that clients will give tips only if they can afford them and if they think you deserve it. Don’t forget that many people in the UK get paid a fixed salary, and never get tips from anyone, no matter how hard they work.

4) Genuinely care about tourists when things go wrong

A guide needs to be able to look after clients if they fall ill - organise a doctor or a visit to the hospital. It is strongly recommended that the guide go with their guest (or arrange for someone else to be there), especially if tourists do not speak the local language. Ideally, the guide should have the contact number of an English-speaking doctor anyway. When possible, and after a few days, the guide should enquire as to whether the client feels better. That level of care really makes a big difference to tourists who are away from home and family.

5) Genuinely care about clients when things go well:

Caring is also shown in the way a guide is interested in the life of tourists and wants to know things about them. It's about more than just being polite: it's about showing real curiosity and interest. A good tip is to remember a few facts about each client, especially if you meet them later by chance.

6) Genuinely care for local communities:

Visitors might not speak your language but they can "guess" how nice you are to other people (e.g. local souvenir makers, shop keepers, tribal communities). They do this by listening to the way you talk (e.g. does your voice sound nice or are you shouting?). Tourists are also always incredibly impressed by guides who in their free time volunteer to run projects that help others in their communities. They like guides who do their best to encourage the people from their communities participate in tourism activities (especially poorer people or women).

7) Patiently give advice when needed

Some tourists need a lot of help and must be explained things more than once; often, it is because they don't always understand how things work at the destination as it is a different country to theirs. Sometimes, tourists want to offer something to the communities they visit but their gifts are not always appropriate. The guide, who understands the culture and needs of local residents, is actually

the best person to advise them about what they should do.

8) Smile and have stamina

Nothing should be too much trouble (unless it really is for a very good reason that can be easily explained). Guides should always be in a good mood and always look alert and not tired (even if they are). This is because most tourists are enthusiastic and want to do or learn lots of things on their holidays.

9) Be very well organised:

UK tourists like things to be perfect and to run like "clock work". They don't want to wait around, they don't want to find out that an activity is cancelled unless there is a real good reason (e.g. the weather is not good enough and can make the excursion dangerous). Being well organised is especially important when dealing with problems and queries as guests always expect their worries or complaints to be dealt with incredibly quickly. You have to be patient with them but they might not want to be patient with you as their holidays don't last forever.

Task 2 – Journey Latin America

It is always a very good idea to research what tourists say about a tour operator and its holidays. It helps you understand the type of service holidaymakers are expecting. Here, the following key characteristics keep on appearing, just as we saw in task 1: well organised, speaks English, welcoming, professional, punctual, knowledgeable and friendly, opens tourists to unique experiences they will remember for the rest of their life, provides excellent customer service; is knowledgeable about the local culture and history, helpful, and makes people feel safe.

You might be a little worried that you are not the "perfect" guide (yet). Don't worry, demonstrate as many of these qualities and skills as you can and with time, you'll become a great guide.

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