

An introduction to working with the Travel Trade

Are you a Wales-based tourism operator looking for ways to boost business year round? Are you looking to reach out to new customers, but maybe don't know where to begin? Visit Wales can help. We want to encourage you to think about working with the travel trade and the potential benefits.

Who can benefit from working with the travel trade

Graded accommodation / venue suppliers

- Quality fairly priced medium to large serviced accommodation (10+ rooms) for both leisure travel trade programmes and business events.
- Venues that can be used for meetings and conferences, special events such as gala dinners and unique Welsh experiences.
- Smaller hotels / inns / B&Bs may be able to work with some of the operators offering voucher programmes.
- Self-catering agencies or critical mass of properties for leisure travel trade. S/C also interesting for business e.g. team building, smaller conferences / meetings.

Accredited attractions

- Attractions, activities, sightseeing & events are all of interest to both the business tourism sector and leisure travel trade.

Activity, general, transport and specialist tour operators & ground handlers

- Guiding services and special interest knowledge/activities (especially for specialist operators such as walking, golf, genealogy etc.)
- Operators who provide team building and incentives for business groups.

Who, and what, is the travel trade?

The **travel trade** isn't a single entity. It consists of different types of operators and third party agents operating a range of business models. Don't let this put you off. The key is finding the right match for your business. Put simply, the travel trade is where others (buyers) sell your product on, either to other buyers or direct to the public, groups or individuals.

These are our Top Ten:

1. Incoming tour operators

These are often represented by the trade association 'UKinbound'. They put together tours, excursions and voucher programmes consisting of UK accommodation, attractions, transport and sightseeing products for international operators.

2. Tour operators & wholesalers

These put together accommodation, attractions, transport packages for groups and FITs (Fully Independent Travellers).

3. Web-based agents

These are growing dramatically in number. Most will be looking for hotels, possibly self-catering. Some also offer sightseeing and attractions.

4. Ground handlers

Ground handlers deliver a range of accommodation (usually hotels) and sightseeing product, plus attractions where possible, to wholesalers and tour operators.

5. Coach operators

They generally create and sell day trips, short breaks and longer holidays.

6. Destination management companies

These companies create and book customized business events and programmes. The market here is mainly corporate groups and associations.

7. Incentive houses

Their main interest is to put together incentive programmes for corporate contacts. They are generally looking for something a bit different e.g. special evenings, activities, behind-the-scenes tours, etc.

8. Professional conference organisers & Business tourism sector

They offer solutions for corporate events and conferences. Buyers organise and book business events for corporate groups and associations either directly themselves or through an intermediary. They will be looking for venues to hold meetings, conferences, exhibitions and gala dinners or unique 'Welsh' experiences for team building and incentives.

9. Group Travel Organisers

Mostly unpaid social secretaries organising visits and trips for range of groups but very influential on a local level.

10. Travel agents

Some agents only sell tour operator products while others will do some packaging and put together tours themselves.

Ok...that's who's who, but why work with them?

Are you finding that bookings are quieter at certain times of the year? Do you find advertising too expensive? Is your marketing budget stretched to the limit or non-existent? Would you prefer to pay commission only for new business?

If yes is the answer to any of the above, then working with the travel trade could be the answer.

We've got seven good reasons why you should consider working with the travel trade:

1. Wider distribution

Instead of trying to sell direct to the consumer try working with a commercial intermediary. In most cases you won't be asked for an up front fee. You will instead be asked to provide good net rates/discounted prices on which they can add their commission.

2. New markets reached

It's sometimes difficult to reach markets and working with the trade means promoting your business in places that you've found hard to reach due to administration and marketing capacity or lack of market awareness.

3. Boost your yields

By having pricing levels which allow the trade to build in commission or discounted rates, you can generate additional sales to increase visitor figures or fill spare capacity.

4. Pay only for results

In most cases you only pay commission or offer a discounted price when the sale is made. It provides an opportunity for greater promotional reach of your product at little extra cost.

5. Form long lasting relationships

The trade gets to know and trust you to deliver a quality and consistent product. They will continue to promote and sell your product year after year, or until market demand suggests otherwise.

6. Less hassle all round!

The trade are the conduit between you and the consumer up until the time the guest arrives at your door. The trade deals with various general information enquiries, financial transactions and any problems the client might encounter. They often also have the ability to sell all of the other components of the traveller's holiday.

So far, so good?

The travel trade has its own checklist and will also request the following guarantees from you:

- A consistent and quality product with competitive pricing while operating within recognized industry standards.
- Be fully licensed insured and understand how to work with tour operators and international visitors.
- Happy to work with long lead in times. The travel trade are usually looking for Products at least 6 months in advance and associations book conferences up to 5 years in advance.

Although negotiations and discussions with the travel trade and business tourism sectors vary there are some key questions you should expect to be asked in forming a working relationship:

- What makes your product unique?
- Can you confirm and guarantee the booking immediately or within 24 hours?
- Can you provide block space (allocations) at your property?
- Can you provide confidential net or commissionable pricing?
- Can you work within their booking and cancellation policies?
- Do you accept vouchers?

- Do you offer group discounts and free accommodation for coach drivers
- Can you provide and guarantee pricing and scheduling one year in advance of travel season?

Can you deliver?

We know you're extremely busy running your business, but working with the travel trade can generate more business. This in turn brings its own demands so before going any further can you meet the following basic requirements?

- Quick and professional response – follow up on enquiries, reservations within 24 hours (*or sooner*)
- Flexibility and Commitment – If the operator wants something different can you accommodate that request?
- Accessibility – Are you available year- round and if not, how can they reach you in a timely and efficient manner?
- Website – Do you have a good website and e-mail able to receive lengthy or large file attachments? Is your site user friendly? Does it protect the operators / wholesalers by showing higher retail rates to the public than those offered to the trade?
- Images – can you provide the operator with quality copyright free digital images in the format necessary for brochures or website?

What we can do to help

Our role at Visit Wales is to influence buyers in the travel trade and business tourism sectors on a global basis to encourage them to bring business to Wales. We have a dedicated team working hard to sell Wales on your behalf. This involves establishing and maintaining relationships with individuals and companies who either currently have, or the potential to include, Wales in their programmes.

How do we do it?

- We support the travel trade by giving access to resources they need in order to sell Wales to their customers. One of the biggest support tools we offer is the B2B (business 2 Business) web-site (www.traveltrade.visitwales.com).
- A streamlined data collection system. We collect data from you the Welsh tourism industry for displaying on the travel trade web-site. Operators can use this information to quickly access up-to-date information on the tourism products in Wales who are willing to work with the travel trade.
- Attend both product and destination trade shows and exhibitions, many of which provide partner opportunities
- Organise familiarisation visits for travel trade to sample what Wales has to offer
- Produces e-newsletter targeting relevant sectors
- Follow us on twitter @VisitWalesTrade @MeetInWales
- Works closely with VisitBritain

Be proactive!

In order to maximise your opportunities for working with the travel trade & B2B sectors:

- Register your product on VW's globally promoted B2B website – www.traveltrade.visitwales.com/get-in-touch/register-your-product
- Keep us posted with your news and developments to feature on our website news page, Enews and product updates. Make sure you send us the information well in advance to productnews@gov.wales We will share relevant updates with tour operators, PR companies and VisitBritain.
- Support us when we bring in tour operators/agents on familiarisation trips to generate more/improved programmes.
- Join us at key travel trade events. For more info, see
- <https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/travel-trade-events>
Sign up for our industry e-news to keep up-to-date on what VW are doing and for any opportunities.
https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKWALES_10
- Meet operators and showcase your product on our familiarisation trips. To be involved you will need to demonstrate you actively work with the travel trade and your product is featured on our travel trade website.
- To reach international markets become a member of UKinbound & European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) to access B2B workshops, seminars and networking events.
- Sign up to VisitBritain's e-newsletter - www.visitbritain.org/sign-our-news
- Take a look at www.trade.visitbritain.com to:-
 - List your product on the free Supplier Directory.
 - Find market specific information that will help you understand international visitors on the Market Insight pages.
 - Sell your bookable product in over 90 countries via the VisitBritain Online Shop.
 - Join a VisitBritain event (UK & Overseas) for pre-scheduled 1-2-1 appointments with international buyers. 'DIT Tap Grants' are available for some VisitBritain overseas events and are subject to availability and eligibility.

Remember to follow:

- @visitwalesbiz
- @VisitWalesTrade
- @MeetInWales
- @visitwales
- @visitbritainBiz
- @visitbritainPR
- @visitbritain
- Use Visit Wales #findyourepic or VisitBritain's #lovegreatbritain on your social media posts

How to get in touch with the Travel Trade Team

traveltrade@visitwales.com

www.traveltrade.visitwales.com/get-in-touch/register-your-product (To register your product on the B2B website)

productnews@gov.wales (to update us on your news and developments)

Telephone: 0300 061 6094