



[Exclusive tourism experiences for Europeans](#)

European travellers are increasingly searching for exclusive experiences across all sectors of the tourism industry. Northern and Western European countries are especially interesting source markets. Any destination can offer exclusive experiences, based on its unique natural features, attractions or culture. Key elements of exclusive tourism experiences include active participation, uniqueness, authenticity and personalisation.

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1 . Product description

Exclusive tourism experiences create lasting memories through interactive experiences. Travellers actively participate. They like to feel as if they have been given a highly unique, customised, personal tourism experience. Nevertheless, uniqueness means something different to everyone. What is unique to one person is not always unique to another. This means exclusive experiences are based purely on emotion.

European travellers are increasingly looking for exclusive and unique experiences, especially millennials. They want to return home with a 'story to tell'.

Because exclusive experiences are so personal, tourism companies can only facilitate them by arranging the circumstances. You make the exclusive experience possible by providing the 'hardware'. However, the actual experience depends on the traveller's perception. You don't control the 'software', so you cannot truly organise exclusive experiences.

Exclusive experiences are popular across all sectors of the tourism industry. European travellers in search of exclusive tourism experiences generally:

- are experienced travellers

- have a higher education
- represent a wide array of social communities
- belong to higher income groups
- are willing to spend money on travel
- are looking for interaction and participation
- combine various types of tourism (like creative, culinary and eco-tourism)
- like to share their experiences on social media

Tips:

- Make your offer so unique and exclusive that regardless of the weather, traffic or crowds, the experience is worth it.
- Nevertheless, be prepared for potential 'fail factors' by having a back-up plan. For example, have colourful umbrellas or ponchos in the back of your truck in case it starts to rain.
- Find a balance between free time and activities. If your programme is too full, your customers will not have time to process everything. That way they won't remember everything once they are home.
- Appeal to several senses: sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. This enhances the experience you offer.
- Be willing to adapt your tourism products to the needs and preferences of individual travellers.

Active participation

The modern European traveller is more experienced and sophisticated than travellers of previous generations were. Today's travellers generally prefer active participation to passively observing tourist attractions. They no longer wish to be shown around a destination on traditional sightseeing tours. Instead, these travellers like to feel involved and actively experience local daily life. They prefer to be seen as travellers rather than as mass tourists.

Tips:

- Include interactive components. Let customers participate, for example in a workshop with local craftsmen, winemaking or harvesting.
- Allow your guests to co-create, rather than merely consume your product. Because of their background and intelligence, travellers can often add value to your product.
- Join forces with other local businesses. Recommend them to your visitors and ask them to return the favour. This keeps visitors in your area for longer and adds another local touch to their trip. That way it benefits everyone involved!

Uniqueness

European travellers also like their holiday to have a unique character. They want to feel as if they are experiencing something that few people have done before. This feeling can come from travelling to a relatively unknown destination, unusual accommodation, or a special activity.

Anything can make an experience unique, from a tiny detail to an overall concept. For example, on their future holidays [around 50% of travellers expect hotels and restaurants to have a unique design](#).

Providing unique experiences may require creativity, flexibility and innovativeness. Above all, you need to know your customer.

Tips:

- Clearly define and promote what is unique about your destination and product. Personal storytelling makes all the difference. Tell your story and that of your community and lifestyle.
- Cooperate with specialised tour operators in your European target market. You have local expertise and they have a deep understanding of their customers. By cooperating, you can learn from each other and create truly unique tourism experiences.

Authenticity

Exclusive tourism experiences should also be authentic. [More than 60% of European travellers indicate experiencing authentic local culture is the most important](#) aspect of their holiday. With 69%, French travellers especially value authenticity.

This requires involving real people, real emotions and real experiences that are not staged. Or at least they shouldn't look like they are staged. Authentic experiences allow travellers to 'live like a local'. For example by staying in small-scale accommodation run by local people and trying traditional food. This gives them a (sometimes literal) taste of what the local culture is really like.

A good way to offer travellers authentic experiences is to give them insider tips. As a local, you can advise them on the hotspots and activities they can't find in regular travel guides. For future trips, [68% of travellers expect insider destination tips from their accommodation provider](#).

Tips:

- Work with local people and products.
- Add a personal, local touch to your guests' stay by giving them insider tips.
- Use local guides who can lead non-standard tours, from a local's point of view.
- Again, use storytelling in your marketing activities. Sell a 'story' and not an itinerary.

Personalisation

Personalised attention is also an important aspect of exclusive tourism experiences. European travellers want to feel that their tourism experience has been created especially for them. They like their holiday to be customised, instead of a standard 'mass tourist' package. These flexible itineraries also allow them to get the most value out of their holidays. For example, [around two-thirds of travellers expect accommodations and restaurants to provide personalised experiences](#).

Tips:

- Be prepared to design exclusive tourism experiences for individual (groups of) travellers.
- Build a personal relationship with potential customers to discover their preferences, needs and dreams. This allows you to offer them a truly personalised trip.
- Be flexible in your offering. Offer tailor-made products and give your customers the option to build their own package. Personal input makes them feel that it is their journey and that they are part of the process.
- Work with smaller suppliers. They are generally better able to provide personalised products than large tourism providers.

Health and safety measures

Health and safety is important to European travellers. They often inquire about the safety of their destination. Vehicles and accommodation also have to be safe. Guides should have good local knowledge. They must know which places are safe to visit and which are not.

Tips:

- Pay attention to general safety measures.
- Tour operators should for example regularly check vehicles and equipment. Hire experienced guides that know the area.
- Accommodation establishments should have safety measures in place. Think of smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, emergency exits, first aid kits and 24hour medical assistance.

Political stability

Safety is important to European travellers, especially because some developing countries are politically unstable. Most commercial tour operators don't offer holidays to countries that their Ministry of Foreign Affairs has declared unsafe. This has led to a drop in tourism arrivals to for example Mali, Egypt and Venezuela.

Tips:

- Keep (potential) customers updated on changes in the safety situation in your area. For example through your website and through your staff.
- Share safety experiences from customers on your website. Let them write about how safe they felt, because people value the experience of other travellers.
- If your region is 'unsafe', commercial tour operators will most probably not go there. In this case, focus on volunteer organisations and individual travellers. Check your country's current safety status at the website of your target country's Ministries of Foreign Affairs like [The Netherlands](#), [Sweden](#) and the [United Kingdom](#).

2 . Which European markets offer opportunities for exclusive tourism experiences?

Demand for exclusive experiences is rising

European consumers' search for exclusivity is evident across industries, including tourism: it is a socio-economic behaviour. This need drives the demand for exclusive experiences in the whole tourism sector. European travellers increasingly look for exclusive experiences and are willing to pay for them. Non-traditional destinations are especially interesting. The wealth of cultural and natural resources in many developing countries allows them to offer unique, authentic tourism experiences.

Opportunities across Europe

There are three European market areas that offer especially good opportunities for exclusive tourism experiences:

High-volume countries

The United Kingdom, Germany and France are the largest source markets for trips to developing countries. Their sheer volume of trips to developing countries makes them particularly interesting target markets. In addition, [travellers from the United Kingdom, Germany and France greatly value exclusive experiences](#). Experiencing authentic local culture is the most important aspect of a holiday for 60% of British, 61% of German and 69% of French travellers.

Countries with higher spending power

Smaller Northern and Western European source markets like the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland and Ireland are also interesting. Per capita, their international tourism expenditure and trips to developing countries are the highest in Europe. This makes travellers from these countries some of the most likely to seek exclusive tourism experiences. For example, [58% of Dutch travellers like to meet locals for an authentic experience](#).

Fashionable countries

The Italian tourism market offers good opportunities for exclusive tourism experiences. Italians are 'fashionable' in their travel behaviour and willing to pay for exclusivity. For example, [Italian travellers look for new and authentic local food experiences](#). They expect flexibility when it comes to opening times and personal diet requirements.

Tips:

- Focus mainly on Western and Northern European markets.
- Study your target audience and tailor your exclusive experience offering to their preferences. Use for example the market profiles created by [Tourism Australia](#) and [Tourism Ireland](#).

Popular destinations have unique features, attractions or cultures

Many destinations have unique features that other places simply do not have. For example natural wonders, flora or fauna that cannot be found elsewhere. Other destinations are home to unique man-made attractions. For example entire islands created out of sand, underwater museums or hotels shaved from ice.

European travellers identified the following as some of the [best exclusive travel experiences](#):

- Cruising the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador
- Meeting mountain gorillas in Rwanda/Uganda
- Arriving in Timbuktu in Mali
- Learning about the lemurs in Madagascar
- Snorkelling with manta rays in Bora Bora in French Polynesia
- Walking beside the Iguacu Falls in Argentina/Brazil
- Sitting on the summit of Stromboli in Italy
- Sailing to Antarctica
- Crossing the Salar de Uyuni salt flats in Bolivia
- Visiting the temples of Bagan in Burma

However, exclusive experiences don't necessarily have to involve unique destinations. Interaction with local cultures and people can also create a unique experience. [Millennials' top 20 incredible travel experiences](#) illustrate this. Their travel dreams include activities like learning how to make pizza in Italy and riding a bike through Amsterdam.

Tips:

- Find your strengths and use them to your advantage. Base your products on your local natural and/or cultural resources that other destinations do not have. For example your country's icons.
- Be innovative, creative and unusual. The element of surprise can make travel magical.
- Look through the eyes of your potential client. Something common to you may be completely new and appealing to European travellers.

For more information on European traveller numbers in general, see our study about [European demand for tourism in Developing Countries](#).

3 . Which trends offer opportunities on the European market for exclusive tourism experiences?

Peer-to-peer travel is expanding

Where peer-to-peer platforms used to focus on accommodation, they are now turning their attention to tours and activities. The experiences they offer are lead by locals, giving them a unique and authentic feel. Locals can invite travellers into their home or business, or show them their community's hidden gems. They can also teach workshops on traditional activities like cooking or dancing.

Tips:

- Study the popular peer-to-peer experiences in your area and at competing destinations. Use this information to expand your product offering. Popular platforms include [Airbnb Experiences](#), [EatWith](#) and [Withlocals](#).
- Collaborate with local providers of peer-to-peer experiences. You can include their existing experiences in your offer, or develop new peer-to-peer style products together.

Creative tourism is becoming increasingly popular

Another trend related to exclusive experiences is creative tourism. This offers travellers active participation in typical local activities through courses and learning experiences. These authentic experiences can range from traditional cooking to dance or handicraft. Originally, creative tourists were mainly people who practiced a creative activity at home and extended this to their holiday. However now, tourists of various backgrounds increasingly add creative aspects to their trips.

Tips:

- Add creative experiences to your portfolio.
- Include locals in your offering. Creative experiences are especially suitable for authentic peer-to-peer type of products.

Luxury travellers are embracing experiences

Exclusivity is often associated with luxury travel, but exclusive experiences don't have to be expensive. Their authentic and unique character is what makes them exclusive, so they can come in any price range. Now, luxury travellers are embracing this definition of exclusivity.

[The values in luxury travel are shifting from material goods to experiences](#), making exclusive and authentic experiences key needs. Luxury travellers look for the most exclusive, unique experiences that money can buy. For example visiting a remote cultural or natural heritage site by helicopter. Or enjoying a traditional meal for local ingredients, prepared by a top chef.

Tips:

- If you can cater to luxury travellers' needs, include exclusive experiences in your offer.
- For more information, see our study on [luxury tourism](#).

The influence of online reviews and visual storytelling is growing

European adventure travellers increasingly research and plan their trip online. To gather information and share experiences they use review sites, social media, travel forums and blogs. Online reviews and feedback from fellow travellers have become important sources of information. This type of User Generated Content is key, as [83% of consumers trust earned media above all other forms of advertising](#).

Unique and authentic experiences are perfect for impressive visual storytelling. Visual media are a powerful tool to attract travellers, especially when shared by their peers. In fact, [42% of Millennials acknowledge their contacts' photos on social media directly influence where they go on holiday](#). This illustrates the increasing importance of visual content and social media for the coming years.

Tips:

- Maintain a strong internet presence and online marketing strategy, including social media.
- Use photos and videos to bring your story alive. For more information, watch this [webinar series on visual communication in adventure travel](#) by the Adventure Travel Trade

Association (ATTA) and Libris.

- Use current customers as ambassadors for your company and area. Encourage them to share their experiences and visuals on social media, write blogs and review your company.
- For more information, see our [10 tips for online success with your tourism company](#).

Do-It-Yourself holiday planning

European consumers prefer to take responsibility for their choices, instead of simply being told what to do like in the past. This is also having an effect on the tourism industry. European travellers want more and more influence on the make-up of their holidays. They no longer want their tourism providers to decide for them. Instead, providers should help them in turning their dream itineraries into reality.

Tips:

- Involve potential customers in generating ideas and making decisions. This makes them feel that they are building their own experiences, at least to some extent. For example, reserve space on your online reservation forms for customers can enter their own suggestions. You can also have them fill out a brief questionnaire before arrival.
- Simple things can help to give travellers a sense of choice. Think of offering varied menus to accommodate different diets and flexible dates and times for planned activities. You could even hire dedicated employees who are able to cater to last-minute requests.

For more general industry trends, see our study about [European tourism market trends](#).

4 . What requirements should exclusive tourism experiences comply with to be allowed on the European market?

For general tourism requirements, see our study on [what requirements your services should comply with to attract European tourists](#).

Some additional requirements apply to the more adventurous exclusive experiences.

Voluntary safety standards

Three international ISO standards support safe practices in adventure tourism: [21101](#), [21102](#) and [21103](#). Additionally, some countries have their own voluntary standards. For instance, [BS 8848](#) in the United Kingdom.

Tips:

- Study the ISO standards on adventure tourism and use them to enhance your safety performance.
- Check for possible voluntary standards in your target markets.
- For more information, see our study on [adventure tourism](#).

5 . What competition do you face on the European market for exclusive tourism experiences?

Price is the determining factor for exclusive tourism experiences. Although most European travellers are willing to pay for exclusivity, they are usually limited to a certain budget.

Tip:

- Be creative. Create exclusive experiences in different price ranges, to cater to the needs of travellers from various income groups.

For more general information, see our study on [what competition you face on the European outbound tourism market](#).

6 . Through what channels can you get your exclusive tourism experiences on the European market?

Focus on smaller specialised tour operators

Customised, personalised products are of crucial importance for exclusive tourism experiences. This means specialised tour operators offer the best opportunities. They can be specialised in specific destinations or segments like adventure, cultural or nature tourism. You can identify them via trade associations, events and databases.

For example:

- [Adventure Travel Show](#) - annual adventure tourism trade event, January, London.
- [Adventure Travel Trade Association](#) (ATTA) - global trade organisation for the adventure travel industry. Organises the Adventure Travel World Summit. You can [search for members](#).
- [ITB](#) - annual tourism trade event, March, Berlin.
- [Pure Life Experiences](#) - annual high-end experiential tourism trade event, September, Marrakech
- [Top Resa](#) - annual tourism trade event, September, Paris.
- [World Travel Market](#) - annual tourism trade event, November, London.

Generating direct sales

European travellers increasingly book their holidays directly with service providers at the destination. Exclusive tourism experiences are also easily added to a holiday by booking them on the spot. To increase your chances of direct sales, you can promote your product on tourism websites/portals.

For instance:

- [Condé Nast Traveller](#)
- [GoNOMAD](#)
- [Wanderlust](#)

For an overview of the trade structure for tourism, see our study on [the channels and segments of the European tourism market](#).

7 . What are the end market prices for exclusive tourism experiences?

Travellers have many destinations and types of holiday to choose from. This makes tourism a relatively price sensitive and competitive industry. The price of a long haul trip consists of three dimensions:

1. The exchange rate between the currencies of the country of origin and the destination country.
2. The costs of transport to and from the destination country.
3. The price of goods and services the traveller consumes in the destination country.

European tour operators are not open about the purchasing prices of their tourism products. According to industry experts, their margins vary between 10-25%. Prices of holiday packages vary widely as they depend on a lot of factors, such as:

- availability
- destination
- modes of transport
- period of travel
- number of travellers
- length of stay
- type of accommodation
- included activities

Tips

- Check which countries have cheap (direct) flights to your destination, for instance at [Skyscanner](#). This gives you a competitive advantage in those countries.
- You can compare prices for exclusive travel products online, for example at [Responsible Travel](#).
- Tourism Boost has some useful [on-line tools for pricing tours and accommodation](#). These help you determine the break-even point and ideal retail price of your tourism product.

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