



## [What are the opportunities for community-based tourism from Europe?](#)

European holidaymakers are increasingly interested in unique and authentic experiences. A growing number are willing to pay a premium for these special experiences, especially if it benefits local communities. Safety, sustainability and interaction with local people are important to them. If communities in your region can offer the experiences that this group is looking for, community-based tourism (CBT) can be a promising segment.

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## 1 . Product description

CBT aims to include local communities in tourism. The most important aspects are:

- benefiting local communities (especially rural or indigenous people)
- contributing to their well-being
- preserving their cultural and environmental assets

Tourism activities should not damage the local community's way of life or traditions. Usually the 'community' works with a local tour operator. The local people get a fair share of the benefits and profits, and have a say in how incoming tourism is managed. CBT often includes elements of cultural and adventure tourism.

Examples of CBT accommodation:

- bed & breakfast
- campground
- community lodge
- family-run guesthouse

- farm
- local family (homestay)

Popular activities include:

- boat trips
- cooking workshops
- cycling or hiking - for example nature trails
- dancing (traditional)
- handicraft workshops
- tours - for example village, coffee, tea or wine tours

Common attractions include:

- archaeological sites
- cultural centres and museums
- cultural, gastronomic, heritage and other routes/trails
- farms
- local markets
- wildlife sanctuaries

## Health and safety measures

Health and safety are important to European holidaymakers. They often inquire about the safety of their destination. Especially safe driving can be a concern. They want to know the qualifications of their drivers and how/when the equipment is tested. Unclean rooms and a lack of (or faulty) smoke detectors are an annoyance at the destination. This might result in bad reviews after the holiday.

### Tips:

- Pay attention to general safety measures. For example, tour operators should check vehicles and equipment regularly and hire experienced guides who know the area well. Accommodation establishments should have safety measures in place, such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, emergency exits, first-aid kits and 24-hour medical assistance.
- Show the outcomes of safety checks and licences to your customers.

## Political stability

Safety is important to CBT 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 previously led to a drop in tourism arrivals in countries including Mali, Egypt and Kenya.

### Tips:

- Keep (potential) customers updated on changes in the safety situation in your area. You can do so through your website and your staff, for example. Be open and honest in your communication: explain which areas are safe or where safety might be an issue. Remember that your customer has plenty of information sources too.
- Share safety experiences from customers on your website. Let them write about how safe they felt, because tourists 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 on the websites of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in your target countries ([Ireland](#), the [United Kingdom](#) etc.).

## Variety of activities

On long-haul holidays, European CBT travellers generally seek a variety of experiences. They are especially interested in soft adventure activities and cultural/nature tours. Examples are local cooking and handicraft workshops, or visiting local markets and social projects. Especially popular adventure activities are walking, hiking and cycling.

### Tip:

- Include various options for activities and/or accommodation. This way, European holidaymakers can compose their own unique adventure tourism experience.

## Knowledge of the local culture and nature

To offer CBT products, you need good knowledge of the destination and its culture, flora and fauna. European CBT travellers rely on you for this, especially on your guides. They want to make a good impression on the communities they visit. You can give them some guidelines about:

- how to approach the local people
- if and when they can take photos
- other cultural 'do's and don'ts' they should know about

### Tips:

- Give your customers useful information about your destination.
- Make sure your tour guides are thoroughly familiar with your destination, such as the region's anthropology, history, geology and/or flora and fauna. This allows them to help your customers connect with the local people. Good guides can create a deeper understanding of the community and significantly enhance the tourism experience.
- Having (knowledgeable!) guides from your community is an advantage over guides from another community.

## Authentic accommodation

European CBT travellers like authentic and smaller-scale accommodation that represents the local culture. 'Yurths', the typical Mongolian tents, are a good example. Hard-core CBT travellers are the least worried about comfort. Families and older tourists attach the most importance to it; in addition, they expect the accommodation to be clean.

### Tips:

- Try to make your accommodation as authentic as possible.
- Provide appropriate levels of comfort, depending on your type of guests.
- Emphasise the authentic elements of your accommodation in your marketing.

## Sustainability

Tourism providers' eco-friendly activities are increasingly important to European holidaymakers. For CBT travellers, social sustainability (concerning local people) is also very important. They want local communities to get a fair share of their tourism expenditure.

### Tips:

- Show CBT travellers what your community does with the money it earns from tourism. For example, investing in education or creating jobs for the community.
- Incorporate sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, for example by installing water-saving taps and showers, working with local products or using solar power and/or solar cookers.
- For more information and best practices, see the [UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit](#). In addition, see our study on [the need for sustainable suppliers](#).
- Accommodation providers can encourage their guests to act responsibly, for example by using less water, energy or paper towels. For more information, see wikiHow's [How to Create a Green Hotel](#) and Global Stewards' [tips for green accommodation](#).

## Internet access

Most CBT travellers want to have some access to the Internet - at least every few days, although they understand that this can be hard in remote areas. They usually bring their own electronic devices, like smartphones, tablets or laptops.

### Tip:

- Make sure your guests have access to the Internet at least once every three days.

## 2 . Traveller profile

CBT travellers generally:

- are well-educated
- have a relatively high income
- are relatively experienced travellers

Based on level of interest in CBT, there are two types of CBT travellers:

## Hard CBT travellers

This is a small group who are looking for a genuine cultural experience. They want to 'live like a local' as much as possible and don't mind the discomfort this may cause them. In fact, too much comfort may give them the impression that the experience is not authentic. Sustainable and ethical tourism is very important to them. Within Europe, this group is the largest in the Netherlands. Dutch travellers have a relatively high interest in pure CBT holidays.

### Tip:

- In your marketing, emphasise the authentic experience offered by your product.

## Soft CBT travellers

This is the largest group of CBT travellers. They are generally interested in culture, adventure and interaction with locals. However, unlike the hard CBT travellers, soft CBT travellers do appreciate some comfort. They are mainly interested if the experience is really unique and worthwhile. This group offers good growth potential provided you are able to meet their needs.

### Tips:

- To attract soft CBT travellers, make sure to provide comfort. This means good quality beds, bathrooms, shower facilities and food.
- Be clear and honest about your facilities. Don't promise something you cannot live up to.
- Keep in mind that this group might not be actively looking for a CBT holiday. However, if you meet their needs you can easily convince them.

Within these groups, there are four further types of CBT travellers:

## Older generation

This is the largest group of CBT travellers. Europe has a relatively large generation of 50 to 70-year-olds. This generation has more time and money available than other groups. Often their children have moved out, or they are entering retirement. They are less tied to summer holidays and tend to travel in the low season. Older CBT travellers are healthy and like to experience new things. They are mainly interested in soft adventure activities combined with luxury, as well as authentic experiences.

### Tips:

- Offer a unique, authentic experience that includes cultural and soft adventure activities.
- Provide a good standard of comfort in your products.
- Emphasise these aspects in your marketing.
- For more information on this segment, see our study on [senior tourism](#).

## Younger generations

This group is aged between 18-30 and 31-50. These tourists are generally higher educated and many have travelled throughout their youth and/or studied abroad. They are increasingly interested in exploring new destinations further away. There are two groups of younger tourists:

High income, little time

These are young professionals with high incomes but limited time to travel. They are mostly between 31 and 50 years old and often travel in couples. The people in this group are looking for unusual 'once-in-a-lifetime' experiences. They want to fit as much into their holiday as possible. Comfort is important to them.

Smaller budget, more time

This group is mostly between 18 and 30 years old. Think of backpackers and gap year travellers. They travel over extended periods of time, from one month to a year. They have smaller budgets and like to engage in the communities they visit. CBT products are especially attractive to them because these are generally cheaper than hotels. They mostly book CBT activities directly on the spot with local suppliers.

Younger CBT travellers also like the idea of taking part in local development initiatives. They often combine their travel with volunteering activities on community or conservation projects. However, this so-called [volun-tourism also poses risks, for example to local children](#) and wildlife.

### Tips:

- Emphasise the unique experiences in your promotion.
- Offer various different options for accommodation and activities that young CBT travellers can combine. This way, they can create a personal travel package that meets their budget.
- Offer budget products, such as volunteering projects or long-stay projects that involve activities with the local community. However, be careful when offering volun-tourism experiences, and make sure they actually benefit your local community, environment and/or wildlife. Work with trusted volunteer organisations.
- Consider [Fair Trade Tourism](#) certification if you are in Africa. Since 2016, this certification standard has included additional criteria for tourism products with volunteer offerings.
- Advertise your products locally; for instance at accommodation establishments, information centres or restaurants in the area.

## Families with children

The group of families with children within CBT is not very large, but growing. European parents like the trip to be educational for their children. They want to show them how people in other parts of the world live, including what they eat and what the schools are like. These tourists look for interaction with locals and also like their children to play with local children. CBT offers such experiences. This is why most European families who travel to a developing country include a CBT element.

Safety is very important. Note that yellow fever vaccinations or malaria pills can pose health risks for (young) children. Therefore, parents prefer destinations that do not require these.

### Tips:

- Emphasise the safety of your destination in your marketing.
- Offer interesting activities for both parents and children.
- Allow children to engage in local culture. For example, arrange school visits, let them play with a local sports team, or create a playground where they can play together.
- Provide a safe swimming area, like a pool, beach, river or lake.
- For more information on families with older children, see our study on [explorative tourism for families with children aged 12-18](#).
- Rural holidays are a popular type of travel for families including grandparents. For more information, see our study on [rural tourism](#).

## 3 . Which European markets offer opportunities for community-based tourism?

For statistics on European source markets, see our study on [European demand for tourism in developing countries](#).

### Popular community-based tourism destinations

According to industry experts, popular CBT destinations include:

- Bolivia
- Cuba
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Morocco
- Tanzania

### Tip:

- In your marketing message, emphasise those CBT elements that holidaymakers cannot find in competing countries.

## 4 . What trends offer opportunities on the European market for community-based tourism?

### Interaction with locals

European holidaymakers are increasingly looking for authentic experiences where they can interact with locals. They like hands-on experiences with other cultures. This provides them with a deeper connection with people and places, as well as an understanding of the culture. This is an important reason for the popularity of CBT holidays. The trend towards holidays that favour interaction with the locals seems to be here to stay.

### Tips:

- Include interaction with locals in your CBT product. For instance, offer homestays, dining with the locals, working on the land or cooking workshops.
- Emphasise the power of CBT as a way to interact with local people and culture.

## Combining CBT with cultural and adventure tourism

Cultural and adventure tourism programmes increasingly include (optional) CBT activities. These tourists often add a CBT activity to their holiday. This makes European tour operators in the cultural and adventure tourism segments an interesting market channel for CBT providers. Combining CBT with cultural and adventure tourism is a good marketing opportunity, as there is a strong increase in demand for all three tourism products.

### Tips:

- Approach European cultural or adventure tourism tour operators in your target country.
- Consider collaboration with local cultural or adventure tourism providers to attract more customers.

## Increasing use of online research

European CBT travellers increasingly research and plan their trip online. To gather information and share experiences they use:

- peer review sites, like [TripAdvisor](#) and [Zoover](#)
- travel forums, like Lonely Planet's [Thorn Tree forum](#)
- social media, like [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)

Online research is a trend that has increased exponentially over the past years. Although its growth has peaked, the use of the Internet to research tourism opportunities will continue to increase. It is predicted to remain the most important research channel for years to come.

### Tips:

- Maintain a strong Internet presence and online marketing strategy, which should include 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, to write blogs and to review your company.
- For more information, see our [10 tips for online success with your tourism company](#).

For more information, see our study on [European tourism market trends](#).

## 5 . What requirements should your community-based travel product 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](#).

There are some voluntary safety standards for where CBT overlaps with adventure tourism.

### Voluntary adventure tourism safety standards

CBT has some overlap with adventure tourism. For more adventurous CBT experiences, three ISO standards support safe adventure practices: [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. Use them to enhance your safety performance.
- Check for possible voluntary standards in your target markets.

## 6 . What competition do you face on the European market?

Competition in the CBT market does not differ from the tourism market in general. For more information, see our study on [what competition you face on the European outbound tourism market](#).

## 7 . Through what channels can you get your community-based tourism products on the European market?

### Selecting smaller specialised tour operators

Smaller European tour operators specialised in CBT or your destination offer the best opportunities. Tour operators specialised in round trips combining soft adventure and culture are also interesting. For them, CBT could be an easy add-on. You can identify interesting tour operators via trade associations, events and databases.

Some examples are:

- [Adventure Travel Trade Association](#) (ATTA) - global trade organisation for the adventure travel industry. Organises the Adventure Travel World Summit. [Search for members](#).
- [ECTAA](#) - national associations of travel agents and tour operators per European country.
- [European Alliance for Responsible Tourism and Hospitality](#) (EARTH) - European network of member and partner organisations in responsible tourism.
- [ITB](#) - annual tourist trade event, March, Berlin.
- [The International Ecotourism Society](#) (TIES) - global network of ecotourism professionals and travellers. Organises the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference. You can [search for members](#).
- [World Travel Market](#) - annual tourist trade event, November, London.

## Generating direct sales

European CBT travellers increasingly book their holidays directly with service providers at the destination. This means they bypass their local tour operators and travel agents. To increase your chances of direct sales, you can promote your product on CBT-related websites/portals like [Tourism Concern](#) and [Responsible Travel](#).

Also consider developing your own national or regional CBT portal. Some examples are [CBT Vietnam](#) and [Pachamama Alliance Ecuador](#).

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

## 8 . What are the end market prices for community-based tourism products?

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 is determined by three factors:

1. The exchange rate between the currency of the country of origin and that of the destination country.
2. The costs of transport to and from the destination country.
3. The price of goods and services the tourist 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% and 25%. Prices of holiday packages vary widely as they depend on a lot of factors, such as:

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

### 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 CBT products via portals like [Responsible Travel](#).

Tourism Council WA has some useful [online 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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