

Entering the European market for cultural tourism products

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The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many Europeans wanting to live more sustainably in the future and minimise their impact on the environment. This extends to their travelling preferences, so it is important that cultural tourism products are sustainable and adhere to responsible tourism practices.

Cultural travel products that have a positive impact on local cultures and communities are popular choices for European travellers and involving the local community has become essential. Employing an enthusiastic and knowledgeable local guide who has been properly trained and can speak the language of the tourist well is essential for a successful cultural travel product.

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1. What requirements must cultural tourism products comply with to be allowed on the European market?

European tour operators selling cultural tourism products are bound by strict regulations to ensure the safety of their travellers and to protect them financially. You should understand what these regulations are.

What are the mandatory and additional requirements that buyers have?

The requirements that European tour operators have for cultural tourism products in developing countries cover the following:

- The European Package Travel Directive
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Liability Insurance and Insolvency Protection

As a first step, you should read the CBI's [What requirements must tourism services comply with to be allowed on the European market](#) and familiarise yourself with the comprehensive details of legal, non-legal and common requirements.

COVID-19: Preparing to reopen following the pandemic

At time of writing in March 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a considerable impact on the tourism industry worldwide. Lockdowns with travel restrictions are set to continue into March in many countries across Europe, including the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and France. European governments continue to advise their nationals against all but essential travel abroad, and countries within and outside Europe continue to impose quarantine periods on inbound travellers.

To keep informed of the situation in Europe you can browse the internet for articles like this one on the BBC website, [Covid: How are European countries tackling the pandemic?](#), checking it offers up-to-date information. International travel regulations are changing regularly and to keep informed, consult IATA's [interactive travel restrictions map](#). You should also be aware of the restrictions in your own country and keep checking in the event of any developments.

However, as national vaccination programmes around the world gather pace, the tourism industry is optimistic about recovery in the summer of 2021. Domestic tourism will be the first segment to recover. In the short term, this offers local tour operators the chance to reach out to local markets. This is likely to be followed by increased travel to short haul destinations. For Europeans this means travel to a neighbouring country on the continent.

Long haul travel to developing countries is likely to recover more slowly and decisions to travel abroad will depend upon conditions of entry imposed on visitors and safety protocols. Research shows that demand for travel is very high in Europe, particularly among adventure travellers. A survey in early 2021 among British and American tourists found that [70% plan to take a holiday this year](#), but that COVID-19 worries are their biggest concern. Being able to travel safely, being vaccinated, low infection rates in the countries they want to visit and the availability of COVID-valid travel insurance are highly likely to impact upon travel decisions.

You should use this 'down time' to prepare your travel product for a European market that is keen to travel but will need reassurance that there are excellent safety protocols and cleanliness measures in place to keep them safe. You must also establish new booking terms and conditions and clearly state what cancellation and waivers you will offer to your buyers during the pandemic.

Consult the CBI study, [How to respond to COVID-19 in the tourism sector](#) for tips on preparing for the future recovery of the tourism sector. The study includes detailed information about revising terms and conditions to help you revise yours.

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has launched a new set of measures to rebuild consumer confidence, reduce risk and encourage travel to resume. The measures were developed with other partners including ATTA. Some of the measures developed include:

- Reducing numbers of participants to allow for social distancing
- Ensuring activity difficulty levels are not above ability to reduce the need for rescue services
- Providing clear, consistent and up-to-date communication on health and hygiene protocols
- Providing clear information in advance and on arrival of protocols such as wearing of face masks, hand hygiene guidance and social distancing requirements
- Encouraging online sales wherever possible
- Encouraging guests to handle their own equipment for the whole trip
- Limiting queuing and physical contact wherever possible

You can download WTTC's [Tour Operators - Global Protocols for the New Normal](#) for more details about the measures and decide whether to apply for the ['Safe Travels' Stamp Application](#).

Together with some major international tour operators, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) has published a range of insights and frameworks to help local tour operators reopen adventure tourism niches safely, including [Cultural Tours and Sightseeing](#). Download the guide to see what you can adopt for your business.

For the remainder of this report, all discussion, insight and advice has been provided on the basis of travel in normal circumstances.

What are the requirements for niche markets?

Preparing cultural tourism products

Culture tourism involves travel to experience and learn about the culture of a country or region. It includes tangible and intangible features of a destination's history and heritage, culture, lifestyle, art, architecture and religion that have shaped the society's way of life. One of the largest tourism niches in the world today, there are many reasons why developing authentic, unique and immersive cultural tourism products are beneficial to destinations at national, regional and local levels.

Fostering local pride by showcasing heritage traditions and cultures to an enthusiastic and interested audience has multiple benefits that are economic, social and environmental, as evidenced in the table below.

Table 1: Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits of Cultural Tourism

Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits of Cultural Tourism
<p><i>Economic:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brings new funds into the local, regional and national economy• Creates new jobs and supports diversification• Supports small businesses and helps them grow• Encourages development and maintenance of new/existing community facilities
<p><i>Social:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generates investment in heritage resources and facilities that support the provision of tourism• Promotes preservation of local traditions, cultures and customs• Promotes positive behaviour• Helps local communities to value their lifestyle and build local pride• Creates opportunities for communities to develop good relationships and partnerships• Provides volunteering/educational placement opportunities for students (domestic and international)• Creates opportunities for local communities/members to interact with visitors and enjoy a mutually immersive experience
<p><i>Environmental:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages preservation of cultural treasures• Boosts awareness of the site/attraction, or significance of the area• Helps local residents and visitors to be mindful of impact on the natural and built environment• Promotes active protection and conservation of local resources

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

It is also important to recognise that there can be negative impacts of cultural tourism if they are not managed appropriately. Such impacts include overtourism, damaging monuments or promoting unacceptable western behaviour that local communities adopt.

The value of global cultural tourism is projected to be worth [more than US\\$1 billion](#) and UNWTO estimates that tourists travelling abroad who take part in a cultural visit or activity as part of their stay account for 40% of international tourist arrivals. Cultural tourism crosses over with many other tourism niches – it is one of the three niche activities that define an adventure tourism trip.

This means that a traveller on an adventure trip is highly likely to take part in a cultural activity on the same trip. This offers particular opportunities to local tour operators in developing countries who are well-placed to develop cultural travel products alongside existing adventure experiences. For more information on how tourism segments cross over, see the CBI interactive infographic [Which market segments and niches should you target?](#)

Cultural tourism products are categorised by two main types: tangible, which is often referred to as ‘built heritage’, and intangible, which refers to experiences that draw on local life, culture and traditions. This study focusses on the broad range of tangible and intangible cultural tourism products.

The table below illustrates examples of culture tourism products in each main category.

Table 2: Cultural Tourism Products by Category

Tangible Cultural Tourism Products	Intangible Cultural Tourism Products
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (built, cultural)	Local/regional/national festivals
Historical and heritage buildings	Local/regional/national sporting events
Archaeological sites	Music, theatre, film, other live events
Museums and art galleries	Street art
Monuments	City tours – by foot, by bike, by vehicle
Places of religious worship	Food – food trails, markets, local producers
Architectural tourism	Study tours – culture, lifestyle, history, art, languages
Other visitor attractions	Community-based tourism (CBT)
	DNA/genealogy investigation
	Battlefield tourism
	Dark tourism
	Volunteering and educational tourism (SAVE)

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Tangible cultural tourism is the largest segment, and involves visits to architectural and archaeological treasures, castles, palaces, art and sculpture, museums and galleries, religious monuments and places of worship like churches, cathedrals, mosques, synagogues and temples. UNESCO World Heritage Sites play an important part in built cultural tourism. There are 1,121 sites worldwide that are designated as either Cultural or Natural; some are a mix of the two.

Most of them (869) are Cultural. If your business is located within easy access of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, you are in a good position to consider what opportunities you could develop to attract culture tourists. Consult the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) for cultural sites in your destination. Some well-known UNESCO World Heritage Sites are listed below.

Table 3: UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Developing Countries

UNESCO World Heritage Site	Country
Sucre	Bolivia
Angkor Wat	Cambodia
Sambor Prei Kuk	Cambodia
Easter Island	Chile
Great Wall of China	China
Terracotta Army	China
Leshan Giant Buddha	China
Forbidden City	China
Pyramids of Giza	Egypt
Abu Simbel	Egypt
Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela	Ethiopia
Mayan ruins of Tikal	Guatemala
Hill Forts of Rajasthan	India
Taj Mahal	India
Borobudur	Indonesia

Petra	Jordan
Chichen Itza	Mexico
Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou	Morocco
Temples of Bagan	Myanmar
Leon	Nicaragua
Machu Picchu	Peru
Historic Centre of Arequipa	Peru
Ancient City of Sigiriya	Sri Lanka
Ayutthaya Temple Complex	Thailand
Historic Centre of Bukhara	Uzbekistan
Hoi An	Vietnam

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Intangible cultural tourism is the smaller segment and involves a wide range of locally based activities that are focused around local life, culture and traditions. They include attending local events and festivals, visiting markets and local villages, homestays, city tours and other local trips accompanied by a local guide, learning experiences (art, culture, heritage, learning, cooking, traditional handicrafts) and music events.

There has been an increased demand among European travellers for authentic and immersive experiences, to meet local people and learn about different cultures. This demand, which is set to increase in the coming years, presents good opportunities for local operators who can offer European travellers unique, distinctive cultural experiences.

When developing your cultural tourism product, you should consider the following:

Quality of guides – the success of a cultural tourism experience, whether guiding a tangible or intangible product, is often measured by how good the guide is. Cultural tourists will judge the level of knowledge they possess, how well they interact with them, whether they speak the language of the group well, and if they are able to communicate well. You must ensure that the guides you use are well-trained and have an excellent level of knowledge about the cultural experience they are providing. These could be:

- A historian with good knowledge of the site or sites visited
- A community leader or member with lots of fascinating stories about the history and origins of the community or communities and/or area.
- A city tour guide with a good knowledge of all the sites being visited during the trip, and history of the city/town.
- A city tour guide who knows all the 'best' places for markets/food/shopping/culture/museums.
- An expert in the subject they are presenting, such as art, language, history, lifestyle, culture, traditions.

Interpretation – you should create detailed, interesting and relevant information about the cultural experience that you are providing. This creates meaning for cultural tourists, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding, giving them a ‘sense of place’ and provoking thoughts and discussion.

As well as generating customer satisfaction, good interpretation has many benefits for local tour operators. It will help you stand out from the crowd, generate good reviews, which can lead to additional bookings, stimulate word of mouth recommendations, raise awareness of local cultural issues and inspire interest.

Examples of good interpretation might be:

- Making sure that historical facts are interwoven with interesting stories and tales to set the site/experience in context.
- Signage that makes good use of imagery and text.
- Well-designed trails and maps using attractive icons and including additional information to create extra interest.

Authenticity and uniqueness – cultural experiences should be designed carefully to demonstrate the rich cultural heritage of the destination. Do not create a ‘staged’ experience. Wherever possible it is a good idea to involve the local community as that makes a more unique experience, for instance, cookery classes hosted by local chef, or a street art tour with a local artist.

If an overnight stay with a community is included within the cultural experience, in a homestay with a family for instance, providers must ensure that the accommodations have a reasonable level of comfort and there are private toilet facilities. Cleanliness is extremely important for European travellers. Ensure that any accommodation or lodging is managed sustainably, uses renewable energy sources to provide water, has water conserving systems in place, uses energy-efficient lighting, and promotes recycling and reusing.

Sustainability – cultural tourism activities should be developed under sustainable, responsible and ethical principles so there is minimal negative impact on the environment or communities. You should also manage your business sustainably, and make sure that you encourage your guests to travel responsibly.

For local operators working in the tangible heritage sector, the [UNESCO World Heritage Toolkit](#) has been developed to help managers of World Heritage Sites to adopt best practice approaches to sustainable economic development through tourism. There are nine guides. Guides 1-4 establish the basic foundations for sustainable tourism; Guides 5-9 are aimed at specific issues. You should consult each of the guides in order to see what can be adapted for your attraction.

For tour operators, there are several certified sustainable schemes that you could consider applying to for your business. The [Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#) manages the global standards for sustainable travel and tourism and acts as the international accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification. It has schemes for tour operators, hotels and accommodation providers, and destinations and governments. GSTC also recognises schemes as aligned with the [GSTC Industry Criteria for Tour Operators](#), including [Travelife for Tour Operators](#). For destinations managers, [Green Destinations](#) is worth considering.

Some countries like [Costa Rica](#) have their own sustainability schemes. Other countries issue sustainability guidelines to support practices of inbound tour operators and accommodation providers, such as India’s [Sustainability Tourism for India](#). To find out whether there are similar schemes or guidelines in your country, consult the website of your Ministry of Tourism and/or National Tourist Board to see what publications might be available.

For more information about sustainability for your tourism business, consult the CBI study, [Entering the European market for nature and ecotourism](#), which has detailed information about the sustainability certification schemes on the market.

Virtual Tours – since the pandemic forced the closure of most heritage sites and attractions worldwide (UNESCO reported 90% of their sites were closed), many attractions have moved their collections or buildings online in one way or another, enabling audiences to continue learning from cultural heritage places and collections. In some instances, viewers can see more virtually than in person, for instance examine a fragile manuscript, look inside mummies or take a tour behind the scenes. Look at these examples, some of which have been created using Google maps:

- [Pyramids of Giza](#), Egypt
- [Temples of Angkor](#), Cambodia
- [Taj Mahal](#), India
- [Petra](#), Jordan
- [The Great Wall of China](#) – costs US\$8 to enjoy the full tour

If you have good computer skills, or someone else does in your business, you could create your own virtual tour using Google’s [Tour Creator](#) (available until 30 June 2021) or explore other [free and open-source virtual tour software solutions](#).

Some operators have introduced a series of live virtual tours for experiences that act as a ‘teaser’, to remind people of real travel. Live virtual tours could involve cooking classes, wine tours or other guided tours of attractions. For some tips on creating live virtual tours, read this blog, [Creating live virtual tours: A guide for tour operators to generate business during COVID-19](#).

Tips:

For tips on ensuring that your tour guides are suitably recruited and trained, read this blog, [How to Hire and Train Amazing Tour Guides](#).

Consider what actions you could take to make your cultural travel products sustainable, and whether you are ready to apply to make your business sustainably certified.

For information on cultural tourism products in other tourism niches, you should read the CBI studies on [SAVE Tourism](#), [Religious Tourism](#), [Food Tourism](#) and [Community-based Tourism](#).

2. Through what channels can you get cultural tourism products on the European market?

How is the end-market segmented?

With a large proportion of international travellers taking part in cultural activities when travelling abroad, it is clear the end market is substantial. However, at a top level, they can be segmented into two major groups.

- Motivated Cultural Tourists travel specifically to experience and learn about a destination’s culture.
- Incidental Cultural Tourists is the largest group who travel for other reasons, such as nature, beach or adventure, and enjoy taking part in cultural activities when they fit in with their itineraries.

Figure 1: The Profile of The Cultural Tourist



Source: Iberdrola/ResearchGate

Cultural tourists are keen to enrich their lives with new experiences while learning about and developing their understanding of the country, the places, its history and heritage. They are evenly split between male and female with an average age of 49, tend to be well-educated and higher than average earners. They are well-represented in the Baby Boomer consumer group (born between 1946 and 1964; aged 57-75 in 2021) who are experienced travellers, cash and time rich and often referred to as the 'grey market'.

However, the Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979; aged 41-56 today) and the Millennial consumer groups (born between 1980 and 1995; aged 26-40 in 2020) are discerning travel groups keen on experiences and are increasingly demanding of unique, authentic experiences that are characteristic of cultural and heritage tourism.

More detailed information about the motivations of different groups of cultural tourists gives some useful information to tourism stakeholders when developing cultural products.

Table 4: Analysis of the Motivations of the Cultural Tourist

Cultural Tourist Category	Motivations for Travel
The culture vulture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture is the primary reason for visiting a destination and the tourist enjoys a deep cultural experience. • They are highly educated, enjoy middle to high incomes and are interested in and motivated by social and environmental issues. • Demand quality and authentic experiences. • Dominated by older consumers. • May travel on an organised tour with specialist group to enjoy a specific cultural experience, e.g. classical music
The sightseeing cultural tourist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture is the primary reason for visiting a destination, but the tourist has a less deep experience. • Also highly educated and likes to engage in a range of cultural activities on one trip.
The accidental cultural tourist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This tourist does not travel for cultural reasons but after taking part in cultural activities, enjoys a deep cultural experience.
The incidental cultural tourist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Largest group:</i> the incidental tourist is attracted by culture and heritage but has another reason for a trip such as adventure or nature. They are more likely to participate in cultural activities when they fit into their plans and itinerary. • For this group, flexibility and convenience is key to attract them to cultural activities, and their age profile is younger.

Source: Visit Britain/Acorn Tourism Consulting

Through what channels do cultural tourism products end up on the end-market?

Cultural travel products are widely sold by a mix of European tour operators including Specialist and Adventure tour operators, and General tour operators that sell a wide variety of different holiday types. Adventure and general operators offer the greatest number of cultural travel products and holidays are usually packaged with other activities. There are a few specialist operators that focus on cultural tourism and if they serve your destination, they are an important channel.

Online marketplaces (or directories) are an important resource for European travellers, as it gives them access to many hundreds of different itineraries from a range of operators to inform their choice. You can also book directly via an online marketplace.

Fully Independent Travellers (FITs) who make all their own travel arrangements often make bookings via online tour operators (OTAs) such as Tripadvisor or Viator. They also like to make bookings once they have arrived at their destination directly from the attraction, local operators or guides.

Figure 2: Sales Channels for Cultural Tourism Products



Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Examples of operators and business in each sales channel include:

- European Tour Operators (Adventure, Cultural, General) – typically, these operators offer cultural tourism as an option within itineraries or provide holidays with a cultural focus. They include [Exodus](#), [Window to Travel](#), [Classic Journeys](#), and the [Internet Traveller](#) (All UK); [Nomade Aventure](#) and [Adeo Voyages](#) (both France); [Journaway](#) (Germany; links work in German only); and [GoYourOwnWay](#) (Netherlands).
- Specialist Tour Operators – are more limited in the market. [Martin Randall](#) is a leading cultural tour operator in the UK, and [Kudu Travel](#) specialises in cultural walking tours. [Envoy Tours](#) and [Indigenous Tourism BC](#) are examples of locally based operators specialising in local culture trips.
- There are a number of online marketplaces or directories that European and local tour operators use to sell their tours. [Responsible Travel](#) and [Travel Stride](#) are popular examples.
- OTAs – [Viator](#) is the biggest OTA platform for cultural tourism products and a large proportion of all their trips and experiences can be identified as cultural experiences. They include bike/walking tours, sightseeing tours, cooking classes, shopping trips, history/heritage tours, guided museum trips, village visits and many more.
- Other OTAs – other notable OTAs that sell tours and travel experiences include [TourRadar](#), [Get Your Guide](#), [Evaneos](#) and [Klook](#).

Tip:

Do your own research into OTAs on the market. Download this guide [95 Place to List Your Tours](#) to help. Be aware that the OTA marketplace is fast-moving and there are many new start-up businesses; some OTAs may no longer exist.

What is the most interesting channel for you?

You should target both European tour operators and OTAs as suitable sales channels for your tours.

You should also look carefully at how to attract the FIT segment. If you want to target the FIT segment, you must have a good website. Consult the CBI study, [How to be a successful business online](#), for lots of useful information about creating or improving your own website.

Tips:

Download the two CBI studies to help you find and do business with European buyers, [10 Tips for Finding Buyers on the European Tourism Market](#), and [10 Tips for Doing Business with European Tourism Buyers](#).

Research how to list your tours on OTAs and visit the sign up pages of [Viator](#) or [TourRadar](#) to see if signing up with one of them would work for your business.

3. What competition will you face in the cultural tourism market?

Which countries are you competing with?

In the short term, in countries without a lockdown, European culture tourists will travel to domestic locations or to short-haul destinations within Europe, visiting countries they are able to travel to without any quarantine restrictions. During spring 2021, travel to long-haul destinations is likely to be limited until the summer/autumn season when it is hoped that the pandemic will have eased sufficiently to enable more widespread international travel.

Every country in the world has its own culture and heritage traditions and there are plenty of opportunities for developing countries to promote unique and immersive cultural tourism offers to the European market. To a large extent, choice of destination for a cultural experience is personal to the traveller. However, as culture is a feature of any travel trip, any destination can be considered a competing nation depending on the strength of the cultural offer.

Profiles of the following countries are provided: Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Peru and Thailand. However, you should also consider the following as competing nations: Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Chile, Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Colombia

In recent years, Colombia's reputation as a must-visit tourism destination has improved following the peace accord between the government and militant group FARC. In 2018, the country welcomed record numbers of international arrivals and the government has ambitious plans for the sector, with the heritage city of Cartagena at the centre of plans. Colombia's vibrant mix of ancient civilisations, old colonial towns, indigenous communities and modern cities offers a strong cultural tourism offer.

There are a wide variety of interesting sites for the heritage visitor including the Ciudad Perdida, built between the 11th and 14th centuries, and St Augustin, a mystical region scattered with 500 life-sized ancient statues that are more than 5,000 years old. Underground tombs, preserved old cities and numerous cobblestone towns and villages offer an excellent heritage destination.

The Spanish colonial era had a significance influence on Colombian culture, mixed with native civilisations of

Muisca and Tayrona, leading to a vibrant, colourful culture of traditions, festivals, music and food. There are many festivals held annually including the largest, Barranquilla Carnival, and the Flowers Festival in Medellin.

Communities in many different rural regions of Colombia are working towards establishing community-based tourism projects such as guided trips to visit coffee farms, a Colombian speciality, to help generate economic sustainability. In 2019, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (MINCIT) launched a cultural marketing campaign, 'Colombia, Feel the Rhythm', using music by notable Colombian artists, on digital platforms including YouTube, Spotify and Deezer.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia has an extremely rich cultural heritage. There are at least 80 different ethnic groups living in Ethiopia, many with their own unique language, art, dress, food and religion. Ethiopia has eight cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites including the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, which also hosts the Timkat religious festival every year. The city of Axum is another key site, one of the religious centres of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and Gondar is known for its walled fortress. Harar has a number of historical and cultural sites and is one of the earliest Muslim centres in this region of Africa.

The Omo Valley in southern Ethiopia are one of the country's key cultural destinations, home to the unique Omo tribes who have lived in the region for centuries and continue to live an unchanged traditional life. The region is popular for tourism although some activities have been criticised for being 'staged' for photography purposes. This demonstrates how important it is that cultural tourism does not have a negative impact on communities visited.

The Ethiopian government has invested in developing the tourism sector in recent years with the aim of making the country one of the top 10 destinations in Africa by 2020, although there have been setbacks on account of political instability. Most cultural tourism in Ethiopia is undertaken alongside adventure tourism activities as the country is a more challenging destination to travel in.

India

India has an exceptional cultural tourism offer that is both tangible and intangible. Its rich heritage over the centuries has had a significant impact on India's culture, which is evident in music, dance, architecture, food and language. The sector is supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, specifically created to boost cultural tourism. Its 'Incredible India!' campaign was developed to drive growth in cultural tourism.

Rajasthan is the most popular state for cultural tourism. It is sometimes known as the 'Culture Capital of India' and showcases extraordinarily vibrant displays of colour and cultures throughout the architecture, costumes, food, arts and festivals. The Rajput rulers were extravagant patrons of art and architecture, seen in numerous places such as the famous pink architecture of Jaipur and the iconic Lake Palace at Udaipur. The state also hosts a large number of cultural festivals including the Puskhar Camel Festival, the Jaisalmer Desert Festival and the Marwar Festival of Jodhpur.

Other important states for cultural tourism in India include Uttar Pradesh, home to the Taj Mahal, one of the world's most famous buildings, with a romantic backstory as a monument of love. The city of Varanasi (or Benares) is a leading cultural destination in the state, located on the banks of the holy Ganges River, with numerous temples and a famous pilgrimage destination.

In the south, Tamil Nadu is one of the world's oldest civilisations, linked to the prestigious Dravidian traditions and cultures. The Hindu culture is especially vibrant, which can be seen in the many thousands of temples, including the 7th and 8th century temples at Mamallapura, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Jordan

Jordan has a rich culture influenced by ancient civilisations, religious sites and cultural hotspots, which all contribute to the country's reputation as a cultural tourism destination. It is best known for the ancient Nabataean city of Petra, carved into the rock more than 2,000 years ago, located within extraordinary desert escarpments. Other important heritage sites include the ruined city of Jerash and the old city of Madaba, dominated by a gold-gilded mosque and minarets.

Community tourism experiences in Jordan are largely based around meeting or staying with Bedouin tribes in villages or desert camps, enjoying traditional food and experiencing their customs firsthand, such as coffee brewing and tasting and falconry.

Developing sustainable tourism and boosting cultural heritage is high on the government's agenda and new plans for the sector were announced in 2020, with funding secured from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Working together, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) will focus on strengthening the cultural tourism sector, developing skills in the workforce, improving access to cultural sites, and encouraging private sector involvement. A Christian pilgrimage trail connecting religious sites across Jordan is also planned.

Peru

Cultural tourism is one of the key reasons for visiting Peru, which is well known as the site of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Machu Picchu, and for the Inca and pre-Inca civilisations. Inca traditions are still practiced today in many small, rural picturesque villages throughout the country. Indigenous Indians have preserved their ancient languages of Quechua and Aymara and many wear the same colourful dress that has been worn for centuries. Homestays with local communities and families are a common activity in Peru, particularly in the mountainous regions, and provide visitors with a real insight into Peruvian culture.

Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail are Peru's major cultural attractions and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. Since 2000, visitors are no longer allowed to visit without permits and guides, which has created opportunities for local people and operators to become involved in the provision of tourism services.

There are strict rules for the average 2,500 daily visitors, who are carefully spread throughout the day. They are permitted to stay on site for no more than four hours within set time shifts and guided tours are limited to an hour to help with visitor flow. Groups must be no more than 16 people. A helpful infographic outlines the rules for visitors.

Figure 3: Machu Picchu - New Rules 2020



Source: Inca Trail Machu

Arequipa, the 'white city' on account of the white volcanic rock on the front of its houses and churches, and Cuzco, the capital of the Inca empire, are other important cultural destinations in Peru. The small town of Puno on the shores of Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world, is a hotspot of Peruvian character and culture.

Thailand

Cultural tourism is very strong in Thailand. OTAs feature a huge range of cultural tours in Bangkok, offering guided tours of the Grand Palace, Temple of the Emerald Buddha and other key historic sights, street art of the old quarter, street food tours, boat trips to the floating markets, early morning experiences at Buddhist temples, and off the beaten track sights of the capital city. Elsewhere, there are cultural sites to be found in numerous

destinations.

There are UNESCO World Heritage Sites at the Ban Chiang Archaeological Site, the historic city of Ayutthaya and the historic town of Sukhothai. In the northern forests, the temples of Chiang Rai are common sites along with food culture in Thailand's food capital, Chiang Mai. Community-based experiences are more common among the hill tribes in north Thailand where projects offer insight into local life.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand features Art, Culture, Heritage & Architecture as a key experience on its 'Amazing Thailand' website. In 2018, it launched a series of Amazing Thailand videos that communicated 'Thainess - happy people, rich culture, beautiful country', Thainess is defined as the originality of the Thai culture and happy, smiling Thai people. This approach has been much imitated by other destinations including Indonesia and the Philippines.

Which companies are you competing with?

Europe has been hit very hard by COVID-19 and is one of the worst affected regions in the world. You must work hard to reassure European travellers that you have robust health, safety and cleanliness protocols in place to keep them safe. It is essential that you are very clear about the measures you have introduced and specify what they are on the homepage of your website or provide a prominent link to a special COVID page.

You can see how European tour operators feature detailed and clear information about how they will keep their customers safe, and in many cases, it is the first thing that visitors see when they click through to the homepage. Look at these examples:

- [Exodus Travels](#) (UK) - provides four links at the top of the homepage offering a refund guarantee, COVID-19 refund commitment, 21-day, no-fee flexibility, and complete financial protection.
- [Martin Randall Travel](#) (UK) - a strong, highly visible message/link directly beneath the homepage image banner directs travellers to view the latest travel advice.
- [TUI](#) (Germany) - provides links to customers on the homepage giving information about rebooking and cancellation options and others helpful advice.
- [333 Travel](#) (Netherlands) - features a section directing users to 'read all the latest news and current affairs about the coronavirus here'.

Colombia

[Bogota Graffiti Tour](#) offers a range of free and paid walking tours of Bogota's graffiti sites and has a reputation of being 'one of the best things to do' in the city. It conducts two free daily tours at 10am and 2pm, and private tours in Spanish, French, German and English, and also offers bike tours and city tours, including a War and Peace tour that discusses the conflicts that have affected the country's recent past. The operator also conducts workshops to learn the technique of art by aerosol.

The website is bold and colourful and immediately on the homepage a clear message advises prospective customers of measures it is taking during the current COVID situation.

[Colombia Travel Operator](#) promotes a range of day tours in Medellin, Bogota and Cartagena and multi-day trips that are generally tailor-made. Examples include, 'Do Not Say That Name - Pablo Escobar Tour', a day tour in Medellin, and a week-long tour through the coffee plantations and Andes mountains. A large banner at the top of the website highlights that is locally owned and operated and has had more than 15,000 satisfied customers since 2009, which is a good idea to generate confidence among potential customers.

It also has five-star ratings from Tripadvisor, Facebook and Google, which are all displayed prominently. The operator has worked hard to help build its tourism offer since 2009 and supports AMI, an organisation that helps children and families living in Comuna 13, a low-income neighbourhood that was once one of the most dangerous places to live. They are members of several national associations including [Acotur](#), the Colombian

Association of Responsible Tourism. As part of its sustainability policy, all guests are given advice on how to act responsibly and have a positive impact on the community.

Ethiopia

[Grand Holidays Ethiopia](#) offers a wide range of tours in Ethiopia, including a series of cultural tours such as the historic route of Ethiopia, Omo Valley tribal exploration and pilgrimage and religious festivals tours. Festival tours include a Christmas Festival Celebration at Lalibela and a Timket Festival Tour with the Historic Route and Simien Mountains.

It has a strong sustainable and responsible tourism philosophy, encouraging its clients to respect the social, cultural and religious beliefs of local communities. The website is available in English, German and Chinese and to encourage potential customers, features '10 reasons to visit Ethiopia' as a blog on the homepage.

[Merit Ethiopian Experience Tours \(MEET\)](#) is based in Addis Ababa and offers a range of day and multi-day tours that are sustainable, insightful and unique. Tours typically involve both culture and adventure elements and city tours of Addis are a mix of history and culture. The website uses many inspirational images and provides lots of information about Ethiopia and its attractions, including the unique culture of the Omo Valley tribes.

The operator also offers a series of special tours that are largely based around Ethiopian culture, such as the Rastafari Tour and a 10-day Historical and Cultural Tour of Northern Ethiopia. Visiting coffee plantations also features in many itineraries. The website has been optimised to translate into multiple languages and the homepage features information about its operations during the pandemic – it was recently awarded WTTC's Safe Travels Stamp.

[Source Ethiopia Tours \(SET\)](#) promotes a wide range of experiential tours throughout Ethiopia that have interesting sounding names, such as 'Experience 56 Ethnic Groups in Seven Days' and 'Journey through the Origin of Spirituality'. It offers trips that are multi-day or short trips, and guests can also enjoy a personal cooking class hosted by the operator's owner, Daniel Ademe and his family.

SET's mission is clearly stated to benefit both communities and visitors to ensure sustainability. Testimonials feature prominently on the homepage, including being featured in a leading UK newspaper the Independent, and SET was accredited with a certificate of achievement for a course in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2020.

India

The travel industry in India is very large. The [Indian Association of Tour Operators \(IATO\)](#) has more than 1,600 members that serve several niche tourism segments, including history and culture. It is a useful resource to find local operators by state who are competing businesses.

[Royal Rajasthan Tour](#) is a member of several national and regional tourism associations including IATO, and its cultural and historic tours visit all the leading destinations in the state such as Jaisalmer, Udaipur and Pushkar. As well as a number of tour packages such the Majestic Rajasthan Fort Tour and the Unforgettable Palace Tours, it offers a wide range of services that are attractively presented in an infographic. If you offer a range of services, you could consider creating something similar on your website to create interest for your users.

Figure 4: What We Offer Infographic



Source: Royal Rajasthan Tour

[Vue India Tours](#) offers tours by theme, which includes Culture and Heritage. To help customers choose from the wide range of experiences on offer, it identifies its most popular trips by South India Tours, Forts and Palaces of Rajasthan, and Golden Triangle with Varanasi. Under the tagline, 'We Don't Sell Tours, We Create Experiences', it has published an impressive list of reasons to choose the operator, which include 23 years of experience, unmatched local experiences, and quality transport, guides and drivers – which are all important factors to cultural tourists.

It provides very detailed information about each of the states it travels to, accompanied by attractive images, and each itinerary is fully explained. Reviews are also widely featured throughout the site and are a mix of written reviews and videos.

Jordan

[A Piece of Jordan](#) is a community project that offers tourism experiences to show the 'real' Jordan, visiting lesser-known places. Culture tours include visits to key cultural destinations such as Petra, but also include immersive experiences with local Jordanian families, cooking and eating with them, to fully experience a cross-cultural exchange.

10% of every Jordanian Culture Tour is donated to the Petra Community Project, which supports children and families in the region. A number of food experiences, such as learning to bake/harvest/cook, are also offered, which complement the cultural and heritage offer.

[Jordan Select Tours](#) promotes a range of cultural tours in Jordan and itineraries are all accompanied by expert guides who might be historians and/or archaeologists. It can also arrange volunteer experiences for customers wanting a deeper interaction with the Jordanian people. Itineraries can also be personalised with additional activities such as photography.

The operator also promotes ecotourism tours and is a member of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and participates in various environmental and conservation projects. Its website is available in several different languages including English, French, Italian, Germany and Russian. It also sells its tours on Tripadvisor and has committed to several safety protocols according to Tripadvisor's [Travel Safe Hub](#).

Peru

European travellers to Peru are typically adventure tourists who also take part in both active and cultural experiences that include visiting Machu Picchu and other cultural sites such as the Nazca Lines and Cuzco. There are many operators that provide guided hikes and trips to Machu Picchu, or longer trips that usually follow a route.

[Alternative Peru](#) aims to take travellers 'off the beaten tourist path' on unique, alternative and authentic experiences, and with a focus on local culture. Its whole ethos is based around responsible travel and it offers travellers ways to support projects or communities visited during their trip, such as donations and volunteering.

The 'Alternative Lima' tour is billed as educational, away from the crowds, learning interesting historical, political and cultural facts, and including immersive encounters with the local community. All trips are accompanied by a bilingual guide. Its blog page features a range of interesting articles about Lima, sustainable travel, Peru and more, including its post on [What is Responsible Tourism](#) that provides insight into how it makes its tours sustainable.

Based in Cusco, [SAS Travel](#) has been offering sustainable, responsible and ethical cultural and trekking trips since 1990 and has received an accreditation award for its work from [SERNAMP \(National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State\)](#) and [DIRCETUR \(Regional Directorate of Foreign Trade and Tourism - Cusco\)](#), which establishes the policy for sustainable tourism. It offers many tours to Peru's key cultural sites. The Heart of Cusco Tour is a non-profit tour to a local community project that helps and trains local families, and promotes

cultural, ecological and spiritual education.

The operator has been recommended by several leading travel guides including Lonely Planet and Footprint Travel Guides and makes good use of its Tripadvisor reviews and other testimonials. It provides detailed information about the COVID situation on its homepage, and the latest information is in chronological order, with the latest information first. This is a very good idea to keep potential customers informed of the full situation in your country.

Thailand

[Lets Tour Bangkok](#) is an operator selling guided trips and experiences to FITs, families and groups, including businesses. They also list their tours on several OTAs – Get Your Guide, Airbnb and Viator, along with Asian specialist OTAs, [Trip Guru](#) and [Trazy](#). It offers a range of tours of varying duration, both in Bangkok and in other destinations beyond the city. Most trips have a strong cultural element. The full day city tour involves all Bangkok's major built heritage tourist attractions, while a unique cultural experience at a Thai farm involves enjoying traditional life at an agritourism destination and hands-on farming activities. It also features a selection of virtual tours online, which are streamed when the tour is operating.

Based in Chiang Mai, [Travel Hub Thailand Tours](#) offers a wide range of small group guided and private tours to the major cultural attractions in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Pattaya. It also solicits blogs from travel writers in return for a discount off a tour or trek and does not promote any attraction that allows elephant riding or performances. All guides are local, licensed and speak English. There are a number of operators in the Travel Hub Family including Blugecko and Barking Gecko Travel, which specialises in trekking.

Tips:

Check what information you include on your website about COVID-19, the current situation in your country, and what measures you have in place to keep your travellers safe. Update and/or improve the information if necessary.

Conduct your own research of other local operators in your country and/or region to see what they are offering.

Which products are you competing with?

In developing countries, adventure tourism products are your biggest competitors. However, adventure tourists usually enjoy a mix of adventure and cultural activities while on an adventure trip to a long-haul destination. Therefore, it is important that you identify the main adventure activities in your region (such as hiking or trekking) and work to develop complementing cultural products to attract adventure tourists.

For more information about the Adventure tourism market, download the CBI study, [What are the opportunities in the European adventure tourism market](#).

4. What are the prices for cultural tourism products on the European market?

Prices for cultural trips and experiences vary by country and type of activity. Many built attractions have an entry fee, and depending upon the attraction, may have different pricing structures. International visitors sometimes pay more than nationals, group prices are sometimes different from individual tickets, senior citizens and children usually pay different amounts, and multi-day entry 'savers' may be offered. Make sure you know what the entry prices are for your local attractions.

For intangible cultural products you should research the relevant prices, for instance, festivals tickets or cooking classes, and make sure you add them to your price structure.

You should be aware of all the other price components in your own tourism product, which might include transportation, guides, food and beverages (if included), accommodation (if included) and any contributions you make to conservation or charitable organisations.

The table below gives a broad indication of prices on the European market.

Table 5: Example Prices for Cultural Tourism Trips and Holidays in 2021

Tour Name	Country	Duration	Price pp (€)
<i>Day, Part Day Experiences</i>			
Chiang Mai Foodies and Historic Walk	Thailand	3 hours	40.00
Private Graffiti Tour, Bogota	Colombia	Half day	56.00
Addis Ababa to Debre Libanos and Portuguese Bridge	Ethiopia	6-8 hours	80.00
Ancient Ayutthaya and Bang Pa In Palace	Thailand	Full day	89.00
Lima Off the Beaten Path - Local Communities and Cultural Immersion	Peru	7.5 hours	93.00
History, Art and Local Culture in Callao - Highlights and Hidden Gems	Peru	4-5 hours	95.00
Do Not Say That Name - Pablo Escobar Tour	Colombia	4 hours	119.00
Historical Adadi Mariam	Ethiopia	7-9 hours	176.00
Private Trip to Petra	Jordan	9-12 hours	270.00
Petra and Wadi Rum	Jordan	1 day	295.00
Machu Picchu Day Trip from Cusco	Peru	1 day	314.00
<i>Short Trips, 2-6 Days</i>			
Varanasi City Tour	India	3 days	184.00
Old Kingdom of Sukhothai from Chiang Mai	Thailand	2 days	195.00

Overnight tour to Petra	Jordan	2 days	289.00
Classic Tamil Nadu	India	5 days	414.00
Culture of Medellin	Colombia	4 days	450.00
Coffee Tour Medellin to Pereira	Colombia	1 week	624.00
Imperial Cusco and Machu Picchu	Peru	4 days	636.00
Discover Petra and Wadi Rum	Jordan	4 days	661.00
Classic Inca Trail	Peru	4 days	865.00
Best of North Thailand	Thailand	4 days	903.00
Historical and Religious Sites of Northern Ethiopia	Ethiopia	1 week	1,260.00
<i>Holidays, 7 Days +</i>			
Cusco, Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, Rainbow Mountain and Humantay Lagoon	Peru	7 days	528.00
Fort Palaces, Taj Mahal, Temple and Lake City of Rajasthan	India	9 days	666.00
Botero Art Tour	Colombia	11 days	707.00
Pearls of Rajasthan	India	12 days	860.00
The Jordan Classic	Jordan	8 days	981.00
Cusco, Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu and Huaynapicchu	Peru	11 days	998.00
Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela plus the Tribal Omo Valley Route	Ethiopia	8 days	1,036.00
Temples of South India	India	13 days	1,319.00
The Nabatean Wonder	Jordan	8 days	1,435.00
In-depth Cultural Tour of Colombia	Colombia	11 days	1,651.00

Discover Tribal Ethiopia	Ethiopia	10 days	3,108.00
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Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Note: Prices exclude international airfares

Tips:

Consult the CBI study [10 tips for doing business with European buyers](#), and scroll to tip 9, Set a fair price for your product.

For more advice about setting prices, download this guide published by Destination New South Wales, [Pricing your tourism product](#).

Conduct your own research to find out typical prices for cultural tourism products in your destination.

This study was carried out on behalf of CBI by [Acorn Tourism Consulting Limited](#).

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).