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Visit Southern Wales

Tool Kit – Working with the Travel Trade

Your guide to working with the domestic and international Travel Trade



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Introduction

Whether you run a large hotel, a guesthouse, a boutique B&B, a cultural attraction, a restaurant, or an immersive local experience – working with the travel trade can be a game-changer. It’s not just about increasing bookings; it’s about connecting to a powerful global network that helps you reach new audiences, reduces your marketing workload, and builds long-term, repeatable income.

By understanding how the trade works and what key players like tour operators, DMCs, and GTOs are looking for, you can position your business to be featured in packaged itineraries, group travel programmes, and high-value FIT journeys. Just as importantly, working with your local DMOs – such as Southern Wales and Visit Wales – can help you gain exposure through trade shows, press trips, marketing campaigns, and familiarisation visits.

If you’re already drowning in acronyms like DMCs, DMOs, GTOs, and FITs – don’t worry, we’ll decode the alphabet soup in the next few pages!

This guide will walk you through everything you need to know to become trade-ready, stand out in a competitive market, and help Southern Wales shine through every experience you offer.

TREDEGAR HOUSE AND PARK



OUTSIDE PARKWAY HOTEL AND SPA



Key Trade Players: Who Does What?

Important Travel Trade Definitions

Before defining different types of companies that work within the travel trade sector, it is important to understand the term **FIT**, and how these travellers differ from group visitors.

FIT stands for **Free Independent Traveller** (also sometimes referred to as Fully or Frequent Independent Traveller). These are individuals or small parties who plan and travel independently, without being part of a pre-arranged group. They are typically looking for flexible, personalised, and authentic experiences that allow them to explore a destination at their own pace.

Unlike group visitors, who travel as part of a larger, organised itinerary, FITs often book their own accommodation, transport, and attractions. However, this doesn't mean they're completely outside the travel trade system. In many cases, the experiences they enjoy have been packaged or coordinated behind the scenes by travel trade professionals. For example, a tour operator may create an itinerary tailored for FITs, and then work with specialist partners in the destination to deliver it.

FIT travellers are usually well-researched, quality-driven, and eager to connect with local culture, food, and history. Appealing to this market means offering flexibility, storytelling, and unique touches that feel personal and memorable. Understanding the FIT audience is essential before exploring how different travel trade companies work – because their expectations and behaviour shape how tourism products are packaged and sold.

DID YOU KNOW?

International travellers are often fascinated by local characters and personal stories. Putting faces to your business, whether it's your family history, craft, or community involvement, can be more persuasive than any polished marketing copy.

Group Travel Organisers (GTOs)

GTOs plan and manage trips for social clubs, special interest groups, and corporate outings. They handle everything from transportation and accommodation to itinerary coordination and attraction visits. GTOs are often volunteers or travel enthusiasts with experience in managing group needs. They play a crucial role in shaping travel trends, particularly among older travellers or niche-interest communities. Building good relationships with GTOs can lead to repeat bookings and strong word-of-mouth recommendations.

Examples include:

- **The University of the Third Age (U3A)**
- **Probus Clubs**
- **Ramblers, art and other special interest groups**

Tour Operators

These create and sell complete travel packages, directly to consumers, and through travel agents. They rely on local suppliers for experiences and accommodation. Tour operators may work with both FIT and group travel segments, and often produce brochures or digital marketing campaigns to showcase their destinations. They value reliable, high-quality suppliers who can offer trade rates, group deals, and excellent customer service. Tour operators are especially valuable partners for businesses looking to reach international markets or benefit from year-round bookings.

Some international tour operators will book directly but may also use a DMC to manage their ground handling within the destination.

Examples include:

- **Crusader Holidays**
- **Pure Wales**
- **Saga Holidays**
- **Shearings Coach Holidays**

GROUP VISIT TO RAGLAN CASTLE



CHEPSTOW CASTLE



Coach Tour Operators

These focus on group travel delivered by coach, often with a fixed itinerary and a tour manager accompanying the group. While they also package accommodation, meals, and activities, their tours are typically pre-set and cater to the group market, particularly older travellers, school groups, or clubs. These operators work closely with local suppliers to deliver efficient, group-friendly experiences and often return to the same destinations. They require partners who can offer reliable service, coach access, group menus, and timely communication. For businesses that are group-ready, working with Coach Tour Operators can bring consistent, high-volume bookings and long-term repeat business.

Examples include:

- **Barnes Coaches**
- **Edwards Coaches**
- **Ellen Smith Travel**
- **Lucketts Coaches**
- **Richmonds Coaches**

Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

DMCs work with international (occasionally domestic) tour operators to deliver services like accommodation, guides, transport, activities, and events. They are specialists in creating seamless travel experiences for overseas visitors, offering local insight and logistical expertise. They do not sell directly to consumers but act as the trusted local partner for international tour operators. DMCs are always looking for new, trade-ready products that can be integrated into their itineraries. Offering them consistent pricing, dependable availability, and clear communication can lead to long-term business.

Because they represent the tour operator on the ground, DMCs must be entirely trustworthy to their overseas partners and take great care of the end client. Delivering an exceptional experience not only ensures positive feedback but can also lead to valuable repeat business. Every element of the itinerary – no matter how small – reflects on the overall package. If just one supplier underdelivers, it can impact the DMC's reputation and jeopardise long-term relationships with tour operators. Partnership and reliability are essential; working collaboratively with a DMC to consistently deliver high-quality experiences helps safeguard and strengthen those important trade connections.

Examples include:

- **Cambria@ASA / Angela Shanley Associates**
- **Janet Redler Travel & Tourism**
- **Abbey Ireland and UK**
- **AC Group**

DID YOU KNOW?

International travellers are more likely to use translated materials – whether on your website, in your welcome information, or in signage. Even a simple factsheet or menu in Spanish, French, German, or Mandarin can make your product more accessible and appealing.

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)

Digital platforms like Booking.com, Viator, and Expedia. They allow travellers to book services directly and offer reviews, instant confirmations, and promotions, often for a commission. OTAs are ideal for reaching independent travellers, but they come with high commission rates and limited opportunities for relationship building. While useful for visibility, relying solely on OTAs can be risky. It's advisable to balance OTA exposure with direct relationships and trade connections that bring more stability and potentially, better margins.

Examples include:

- **Booking.com**
- **Expedia**
- **Airbnb**
- **Lastminute.com**

TINTERN ABBEY



Tour Wholesalers

These companies act as intermediaries between coach companies or GTOs and the tourism suppliers, creating full packages, often specialising in mini-breaks or group travel. They research and assemble full packages and often have deep knowledge of the travel trade's needs. Tour wholesalers tend to focus on tried-and-tested experiences and destinations that appeal to the over-50s market or inbound group travellers. Being included in their itineraries often leads to high-volume bookings.

Examples include:

- **Albatross Travel**
- **Dunwood Travel**
- **Greatdays Group Travel**
- **Trafalgar**

Travel Agents

Travel agents are the shopfronts of the travel trade industry. They act as resellers of holiday packages, flights, cruises, and travel-related services, offering face-to-face, phone, and online booking options. Travel agents don't typically create the travel packages themselves, instead, they sell pre-packaged holidays designed by tour operators, earning a commission for each booking. A travel agent's role is to match their clients with the right product, whether that's a weekend break in London, a guided group tour through Wales, or a bespoke honeymoon package to Patagonia. They offer convenience, customer service, and travel advice to the end consumer, while handling payments, documentation, and any changes or cancellations on the traveller's behalf.

Understanding DMCs vs. DMOs

GUARDIAN, SIX BELLS



DID YOU KNOW?

Visitors from long-haul markets, like North America, the Middle East, and Asia, are far more likely to book complete packages that include accommodation, activities, and transport. These packages are often promoted through joint marketing campaigns run by tour operators or DMCs.

- **DMCs (Destination Management Companies):** These are commercial, for-profit businesses that work behind the scenes to deliver tourism services on behalf of overseas tour operators. DMCs are logistics experts who curate and manage everything from hotel bookings and transfers to guided tours and exclusive experiences. Their job is to ensure a seamless experience for visitors by liaising with trusted local suppliers. DMCs are instrumental in shaping the visitor's perception of a destination, and they rely heavily on dependable, professional partners who understand the expectations of international guests. For a local supplier, being included in a DMC's programme means repeat business, early bookings, and global visibility – often without needing to engage directly with international customers.

- **DMOs (Destination Management Organisations):** These are non-commercial bodies, often government-funded or not-for-profit. They focus on promoting a destination. DMOs like Visit Wales or Southern Wales Tourism develop branding, marketing campaigns, and support local businesses through training, showcasing, and funding opportunities. They represent the region at travel trade shows, facilitate press trips, familiarisation visits, and work to raise the profile of the destination both domestically and internationally.

DMOs are always keen to hear about new products, experiences, or developments, especially ahead of key travel trade events or when preparing newsletters and destination updates. They are often the ones coordinating familiarisation visits, so being on their radar increases your chances of being included. Simply put, if they know about your product, it's better for everyone: it helps them promote the destination more effectively and gives your business greater visibility through their trade and media networks. For tourism providers, engaging with your local DMO is an essential step in increasing exposure and accessing valuable marketing platforms that might otherwise be out of reach.

Why Work with the Travel Trade?

Whether you're an accommodation provider, attraction, food stop, or experience host, working with the travel trade is more than a visibility boost. It's a strategic move to future-proof your business, increase bookings, and access new markets with minimal upfront costs.

From GTOs and Coach Companies to Tour Operators and DMCs, the trade connects you to ready-made sales channels and established customer bases, both in the UK and overseas. These industry professionals promote destinations through brochures, digital campaigns, and packaged itineraries that reach thousands of potential travellers each year.

Becoming trade-ready means your product could be included in these itineraries – helping you fill capacity, drive off-season revenue, and reduce reliance on one-off or last-minute bookings. For many tourism businesses in Wales, the trade has become a vital and consistent route to market, acting as an extension of their own sales and marketing team.

- **Access New Markets:** Trade partners open doors to global and specialist segments. These include international tourists, group travel markets, and niche sectors such as cultural or adventure tourism. Trade professionals already have strong relationships with customers and promote Wales effectively.

TOUR AT RHONDDA HERITAGE PARK: A WELSH COAL MINING EXPERIENCE



- **No Upfront Marketing Costs:** Most trade deals are commission-based or use net pricing, meaning you only pay when a booking is made. This removes the financial barrier of large advertising campaigns and gives smaller operators a level playing field to compete with larger brands.
- **Reliable Bookings:** Trade buyers often book in advance and return each year. Their customers tend to plan earlier and are more committed, reducing your cancellation risks, and helps you with staffing, planning, and cash flow.
- **Admin Offloaded:** Tour operators and DMCs manage everything from itinerary planning to customer service. They handle payments, bookings, and any last-minute changes, leaving you free to focus on delivering a great experience.
- **Part of a Package:** Your product becomes one piece in a bigger story. Being featured in brochures, itineraries, or themed packages increases your visibility and makes your offering more appealing to both the trade and travellers.

The trade isn't just for big businesses. With the right preparation, even small, independent tourism providers can attract group bookings, international visitors, and high-value FIT travellers. Becoming trade-ready opens the door to long-term partnerships that bring growth, consistency, and reputation building.

Are You Ready?

PORTHCAWL



Are you ready for FIT Visitors?

FIT are curious, self-directed, and actively seeking out places and experiences that feel personal, meaningful, and different from the mainstream. They often plan well in advance, are typically digitally savvy, and value quality, authenticity, and a strong sense of place over price alone.

They're looking for immersive experiences – not just to see a destination, but to connect with it. They want freedom, flexibility, and a deeper understanding of the local culture.

For Attractions:

- **Behind-the-scenes access:** Let them feel like insiders with access to unseen areas or exclusive moments with staff or curators.
- **Workshops or interactive sessions:** Hands-on activities like food tastings, craft workshops, or wildlife encounters add depth and create memories.
- **Local storytelling and interpretation:** Share the hidden histories, legends, and personal stories that bring your attraction to life.
- **Flexible entry options:** Timed or open-entry tickets, as well as audio guides or digital enhancements, are appreciated.

For Accommodation Providers:

- **Local produce, personal touches, curated welcome experiences:** Offer a welcome that reflects your location; think Welsh cakes, handwritten notes, or artisan toiletries.
- **Unique architecture, Welsh language use, or artistic design:** Let your property reflect your culture – whether it's a converted chapel, a farmhouse B&B, or a boutique inn with contemporary Welsh art.
- **Partnering with local guides or creators:** Offer curated packages with local storytellers, foragers, adventure guides, or makers.
- **Flexible stays and thoughtful amenities:** FITs often combine destinations; make booking easy, offer early check-in, and consider extras like luggage storage or laundry service.

To appeal to FIT travellers, make sure your story is visible on your website and booking platforms. Include strong photography, highlight what's unique, and help them imagine the experience from their perspective. Be personal, proud, and easy to book and you'll turn independent travellers into lifelong ambassadors.



ST FAGANS NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

DID YOU KNOW?

Wi-Fi access, contactless payment, and clear digital communication are now minimum expectations for many international visitors, even at rural sites. Being digitally ready is no longer a bonus; it's a basic part of the visitor experience.



Are You Group Ready?

Group travellers have specific needs and meeting them can turn a one-time visit into regular, reliable business. If your business caters for groups, it's vital to show that you're set up to welcome them comfortably and professionally.

Being 'group ready' means going beyond the basics and showing that you understand the dynamics of group travel, including logistical requirements, timing, and communication.

Here are some essentials to consider:

- Coach drop-off and parking close to the entrance – or clear instructions for nearby options.
- Pre-bookable group menus with options for dietary requirements and efficient service.
- A designated group liaison or staff member trained to handle group queries and logistics.
- Flexible deposit, cancellation, and invoicing policies tailored to group needs.
- Ground floor access, accessible toilets, and lift access where applicable.
- Space for group assembly and briefings (especially useful for attractions and guided visits).
- Welcome signage or personalised greetings to make the group feel valued.
- Facilities for the driver and guide (e.g. rest space, refreshments).
- Pre-prepared promotional materials or information packs for group leaders.

Even if you're a small business, implementing these touches shows that you're serious about welcoming groups, and it helps travel trade partners feel confident in recommending you as part of their itineraries.

WALES PERFUMERY



Make Coach Drivers and Tour Managers Your Allies

Drivers and tour managers are the unsung heroes of group travel and they hold significant influence over where groups stop, eat, and explore. A great experience for them can translate into long-term loyalty and regular business from future groups.

These professionals are not just there for logistics; they build rapport with passengers, help manage expectations and often make on-the-spot decisions that impact the group's itinerary. Winning them over can make a big difference to your repeat business.

Consider offering:

- **Complimentary food or refreshments:** A hot drink, meal, or snack goes a long way in showing appreciation.
- **Dedicated rest space or priority seating:** Small gestures that make drivers and guides feel welcome and comfortable.
- **Recognition:** A friendly, informed welcome and a thank-you at the end of the visit can leave a lasting impression.

Happy drivers and tour managers often become your greatest ambassadors. Treat them well, and they'll bring your business.

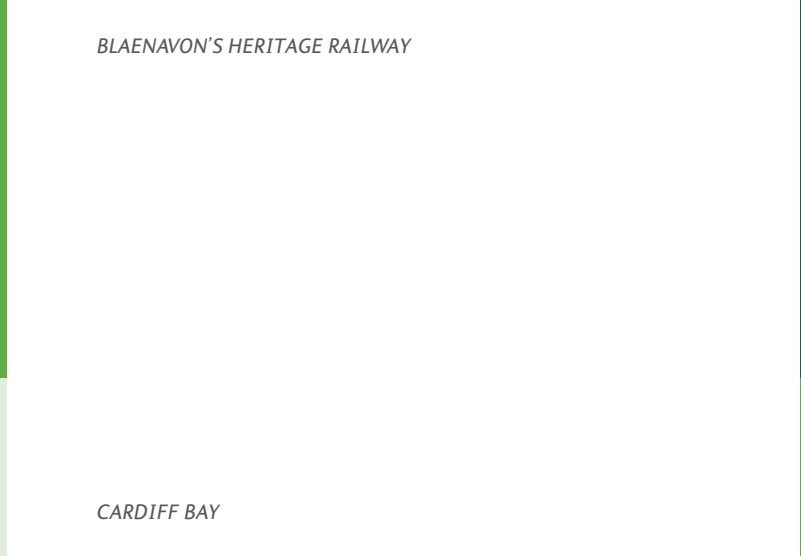
DID YOU KNOW?

International visitors are often more interested in cultural and local experiences than domestic travellers. They're actively looking for food tastings, guided heritage walks, artisan workshops, and authentic storytelling, especially when these can't be found anywhere else.

CARDIFF CASTLE



BLAENAVON'S HERITAGE RAILWAY



CARDIFF BAY

Are you ready for Business Events (MICE)?

The Mice Market (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) offers significant potential for tourism businesses across Wales. And you don't have to be a large conference centre or hotel to get involved.

Many corporate planners and incentive organisers are looking for authentic, unique, and memorable experiences for smaller groups. This could include:

- Hosting a team-building activity at your attraction or outdoor venue.
- Offering a private dining space or chef-led experience in your café or restaurant.
- Providing bespoke, exclusive use stays in characterful accommodation.
- Delivering talks, craft sessions, or behind-the-scenes access for VIP guests.

Being MICE-ready means offering flexibility, professionalism, and a polished experience that meets the expectations of corporate guests. You should also be able to handle bookings 6–24 months in advance, respond promptly to enquiries, and present your business in a way that appeals to event planners; think professional photography, clear pricing, and tailored packages.

Wales' sense of place, authenticity, and warm welcome are exactly what many MICE buyers are looking for even in smaller businesses.



Pricing for the travel trade

CARDIFF MARKET



Net Pricing vs. OTA Commissions – A Financial Example

Offering static net rates to DMCs can be more profitable than fluctuating OTA commissions.

By offering net rates, you're not just securing predictable income, you're also contributing to your own marketing success. Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and Tour Operators invest thousands of pounds every year attending international trade shows, building relationships with global buyers, and distributing brochures and digital campaigns that promote the very itineraries your product is featured in.

When you offer net pricing and a clear, trade-friendly package, you're making it easier for them to include you in these high-value promotional efforts.

In essence, their global reach becomes your marketing channel, at no cost to you until a sale is made. It's a smart, performance-based way to extend your brand into markets you might never otherwise reach.

Late OTA bookings often require heavy discounts and result in lower profit margins. Net rates offer stability and better planning.

	DMC/Tour Operator (Static Net Rate)	OTA (Dynamic Pricing)
Public Rate	£150	£150
Net Rate	£120	N/A
Commission Paid	£0	15-20%
Income to You	£120	£120–£127.50
Booking Lead Time	3–12 months	Often <30 days
Cancellation Risk	Low (mostly prepaid or very close to departure date)	Higher (last-minute changes)
Revenue Certainty	High	Variable

For attractions/activity providers, offering a trade discount to Tour Operators, DMCs, and GTOs that is in line with the commission typically offered to OTAs should be the norm. If you're already giving 15–25% to OTAs, it makes sense to offer a similar rate to trade partners who are actively promoting your attraction within wider packages or itineraries. In addition to trade rates, attractions should also consider operating a voucher redemption scheme, especially useful for FIT travellers. In this model, approved trade partners are issued vouchers that their clients present at the entrance (either on arrival or as part of pre-booking). The voucher is then redeemed by the attraction, and the trade partner is invoiced for the entrance fee, ideally on a weekly or monthly basis for administrative ease. This setup offers flexibility for the traveller while allowing attractions to work confidently with trade partners, knowing payments will be settled efficiently. It also avoids the need for advance payments or complex booking integrations, making it an ideal solution for both parties.

CARDIFF CASTLE



Consideration for Pricing Strategy

When setting your pricing for the travel trade, it's worth considering whether you need separate rate structures for groups and FITs, or whether it's more practical to focus on the total volume and value a trade partner can bring over a season. Trade professionals may say, "We can bring you 100 people," and the instinctive response is often, "We can't handle 100 at once." But in reality, that might mean 100 people spread out across the year, in twos and fours for FIT visits, or in a few small groups over several weeks. Rather than thinking in terms of single large blocks, look at the potential of seasonal yield. A tour operator or DMC might deliver dozens of bookings across many months, making them just as valuable as a one-off large group. By adopting a clear, consistent trade policy that reflects the overall opportunity, rather than just on-the-day numbers, you can build flexibility into your pricing model and make your product more appealing to a wider range of trade partners.

DID YOU KNOW?

International visitors often research their trips months in advance, and many use inspiration from social media, travel blogs, and YouTube videos. If your product isn't visible online, it may not even be considered.

How to Get Involved with the Travel Trade

Becoming trade-ready doesn't happen overnight but taking a few key steps will help you build relationships and get your product in front of the right people.

- **Offer net/static rates and commission structures:** Make it easy for trade partners to include you in their pricing models. Be clear about what is included, what your booking policies are, and your group rates.
- **Ensure your product is group and FIT-friendly:** This means not just physical space (like coach parking or flexible menus) but also your operational mindset; can you handle advance bookings, changes, and different traveller needs?
- **Collaborate with nearby businesses:** Link with local attractions, food stops, and accommodations to offer themed or interest-based packages. Promote each other, and why not trial each other's products? Just be mindful of the legalities around packaging if you intend to sell overnight packages including activities (see the section on bonding/trust accounts).
- **Be visible through partners:** Even if you can't attend trade shows, work with local hotels, attractions, DMCs, or DMOs who are exhibiting. Make sure they're armed with your latest information and can confidently speak about what you offer.
- **Attend travel trade events:** Get yourself in front of buyers at major shows like World Travel Market (WTM), British Tourism & Travel Show (BTTS), or regional showcases. These events are ideal for building face-to-face relationships.



OGMORE CASTLE

- **Speed-Networking Events:** These short, timed meetings, often likened to speed dating, are your chance to make a powerful first impression. Events like the Britain & Ireland Marketplace (BIM) are a great example. You'll typically have around 10 minutes to introduce your product, explain how it fits into their programme, and exchange details. Be concise, professional, and follow up promptly after the event.
- **Prepare professional materials:** A trade pack or factsheet should include descriptions, images (a bank of high-resolution images, ready to go is very positive for the travel trade), rates, capacity, booking info, any trade incentives and clear contact details. Multi-lingual materials are helpful when dealing with the international trade.
- **Think Digitally:** Not all trade materials need to be printed. Having a well-organised set of digital resources (PDF factsheets, rate cards, image banks) is often more useful and easier to share. Beyond this, think about how your digital presence reflects your offer to the travel trade. Platforms like LinkedIn are ideal for making B2B connections, sharing updates, and engaging with industry professionals, while Instagram and other visual platforms can give tour operators and buyers a real sense of your product. Use your social channels not just for consumers, but to showcase what makes you trade-ready.

Getting involved in the trade is about being prepared, proactive, clear, and cooperative.

Maintaining Trade Relationships

Trade relationships, like any business partnership, require care, consistency, and communication. After that initial connection is made, nurturing the relationship can lead to long-term bookings and trust.

- **Regular Updates:** Send trade-specific email newsletters every 6 months to keep your product top-of-mind. Include seasonal offers, availability updates, new experiences, testimonials, or operational changes. Even a short, friendly message helps maintain the connection.
- **Personal Touches:** A handwritten note, holiday card, or thank you email can go a long way in building rapport. Reference a previous meeting or visit to show you remember and value the relationship.
- **Great Stories:** Trade buyers sell your product to their customers, so give them a compelling story to tell. Share the origins of your business, the people behind it, your commitment to sustainability or local sourcing, or any quirky, memorable details that help position you as unique.
- **Show Enthusiasm and Reliability:** Be easy to work with, respond promptly, and deliver what you promise. Consistency builds confidence, and to repeat inclusion in tour itineraries.
- **Invite Feedback:** Ask what worked well or how you can better meet the needs of their clients. Demonstrating that you're open to improvement shows professionalism and a collaborative spirit.
- **Think to the Future:** Keep your trade partners informed about what's coming up, not just what's available now. If you have a new product, experience, or upgrade launching in the future, let them know so they can plan accordingly. Tour operators and DMCs often build itineraries 6–18 months ahead, so early notice gives you a better chance of being included in future programmes. Forward-thinking communication shows you're organised, proactive, and serious about long-term partnerships.

Familiarisation (FAM) Visits: Showcasing Your Experience

FAM visits, short for familiarisation visits, are a key part of how travel trade professionals decide what to include in their itineraries. These visits give buyers, tour managers, and other trade contacts the opportunity to experience your product first-hand and assess how it fits into a package or group offering. FAM visits are often arranged by Destination Management Companies (DMCs), who want to showcase the on-the-ground experiences they can provide, or by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) such as Southern Wales Tourism, Visit Wales, or VisitBritain. These organisations coordinate itineraries, invite buyers, and look for trade-ready products that help strengthen the destination's appeal. Getting involved in FAM visits can be one of the most effective tools for generating future bookings. It builds confidence, creates personal connections, and helps trade partners communicate the value of your experience to their customers with authenticity and enthusiasm.

- Can you offer a complimentary experience for 1 or 2 people? When individual trade contacts visit, such as a tour operator, DMC representative, or travel writer, it's common to provide complimentary entry, accommodation, or meals in return for future promotion or business.
- For larger groups, consider a heavily discounted rate. If a DMO or regional partner organises a FAM trip for multiple buyers or operators, consider offering a reduced trade rate. Attractions may still be able to offer complimentary access, while accommodation providers may charge a discounted room rate.
- Think of it as an investment. A FAM visit is your chance to shine; ensure the experience is well-presented, your staff are briefed, and that you follow up afterwards with supporting materials or a thank you note.

Making it easy for the trade to experience what you offer increases the chance you'll be included in future tours, itineraries, and campaigns.



NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF

Trade Tips: Standing Out

The travel trade sees thousands of tourism businesses every year, so what makes yours memorable? Standing out isn't just about being flashy or big; it's about being clear, distinctive, and trade-friendly.

BIG PIT NATIONAL COAL MUSEUM



- 1 Join regional networks (e.g. Southern Wales Tourism):** These networks amplify your voice, connect you to buyers, and may promote you at major trade shows.
- 2 Create ready-made itineraries that include nearby attractions, dining, or activities:** Help trade buyers visualise how your product fits into a broader visit.
- 3 Use bilingual materials and highlight your Welshness:** Emphasise what makes you unique – your story, language, culture, and location.
- 4 Think about your image:** Professional photography, how you are seen.
- 5 Have trade-ready resources:** Prepare a product factsheet with images, pricing (net or commissionable), capacity, seasonality, and group options.
- 6 Be responsive and consistent:** Trade buyers work to tight timelines. Fast, friendly communication builds trust quickly.
- 7 Offer familiarisation visits (FAMs):** Invite trade buyers or tour managers to experience your product first-hand. If they love it, they'll sell it.
- 8 Share great stories:** Stories sell. Promote your people, history, community involvement, or creative touches that can be easily shared with clients.

When trade buyers can clearly understand your offer and see how it enriches their itinerary, they're far more likely to include it.

Other factors to consider

SOUTHERNDOWN



Seasonality & Yield Management

Why it matters: The trade can help you fill gaps during quieter periods and flatten out seasonal peaks and troughs.

What to include:

- How to use trade partnerships to increase off-season occupancy or footfall.
- Offering shoulder-season rates or exclusive seasonal packages to entice trade buyers.
- Highlighting unique seasonal draws (e.g., autumn foliage walks, Christmas markets, lambing season, local festivals).

Digital Readiness for Trade

Why it matters: Even in B2B sales, digital presentation and systems are key.

What to include:

- Ensure your website is fast, mobile-friendly, and trade-friendly (PDF factsheets, contact form, etc.).
- Integration with availability calendars or booking systems (even if trade books offline, being transparent about capacity helps).
- Good quality downloadable imagery and a press/media folder.

Tracking ROI from the Trade

Why it matters: Understanding the value of your trade relationships helps justify time and effort.

What to include:

- Encourage tracking trade enquiries and bookings separately from other channels.
- Suggest basic CRM usage or even just spreadsheets to monitor partner performance and engagement.
- Promote requesting post-FAM feedback and debriefs to identify what worked.

Customer Feedback Loops via the Trade

Why it matters: Trade partners often hear what their clients really thought.

What to include:

- Ask DMCs and tour operators to share anonymised feedback.
- Use that feedback to improve your offer and tweak your trade packs.
- Encourage tour managers/guides to leave reviews on your behalf or provide testimonials.

Sustainability & Accessibility Readiness

Why it matters: These are increasingly important for trade buyers (especially international).

What to include:

- Mentioning if you have sustainability practices (green credentials, local sourcing, carbon offsetting).
- Accessibility info clearly provided: step-free access, dietary needs, etc.
- Promote your inclusion in sustainability or accessibility schemes (Green Key, Visit Wales Accreditations, etc.).

Leveraging Local Advocacy

Why it matters: Often, word-of-mouth among operators can be as valuable as buyer showcases.

What to include:

- Build relationships with local guides, drivers, and hotel reception staff – they often recommend activities to groups.
- Get featured on local DMO and DMC newsletters, training materials, and internal fam trip lists.
- Offer familiarisation opportunities for front-line staff: Invite local guides, drivers, and hospitality staff to experience your product first-hand, even if just for a short visit or taster session. When they know what you offer, they're more confident recommending it and become informal ambassadors for your business.

Contracts & Trade Agreements

Why it matters: Many suppliers are unsure how formal to be with pricing or policies.

What to include:

- A basic trade rate agreement template or checklist (what to include: validity dates, blackout periods, cancellation terms, etc.). Many DMCs/Tour Operators etc will have these, that they can share with you. Consider developing your own.
- Consider whether to offer gross vs. net pricing and when to use each.
- Clarify payment terms and invoicing procedures: Be upfront about how and when you expect to be paid – whether that's on booking, after the visit, or via monthly invoicing.

Bonded Tour Operators: Packaging Without the Risk

It is a legal requirement to have financial protection in place when you are packaging multiple tourism services, such as accommodation and an activity, and selling them as one combined price. This applies whether you're targeting international visitors or the domestic market. To comply, you need to either be bonded, or at the very least, use a trust account (usually managed by a solicitor). These mechanisms ensure that the customer's money is protected and not released until the consumer returns home satisfied.

For many small businesses, setting up bonding or a trust account independently can be time-consuming and costly. That's why working with a bonded tour operator is often the simplest and most cost-effective route. The tour operator takes the payment from the customer and holds it until the trip has taken place, then pays each supplier within the package.

This model offers peace of mind to the customer and legal protection to the supplier. You still retain full control over your product and how it's marketed, but the financial risk and regulatory responsibility are handled by the tour operator. It's a win-win setup that allows you to focus on delivering an exceptional experience while being part of a legally compliant and professional supply chain.

DID YOU KNOW?

First-time visitors to Wales are often surprised by the strength of local identity and the Welsh language – and they love it. Highlighting your Welshness (in menus, greetings, or interpretation) can be a major draw for curious, culturally minded travellers.

Sense of Place: Croeso – Why Wales' Welcome is Different

Wales is more than a destination. It's a deep-rooted experience that lingers in the memory – a place where heritage, language, culture, and landscape combine to offer visitors something truly distinct.

- **Croeso Cynnes Cymreig – the Warm Welsh Welcome;** It's not a slogan, it's a spirit. It's about being genuine, personal, and proud to share our home. Whether you're a café owner, driver, guide, or hotelier, your warmth can define someone's entire perception of Wales.
- **Language:** The Welsh language is one of the most striking ways to express authenticity. It gives places and products character and signals to visitors that they're somewhere unique. Whether it's through bilingual signage, menus, greetings, or storytelling, the presence of Welsh offers depth and identity.
- **Heritage:** Wales is steeped in history – every valley, castle, quarry, and chapel tells a story. Visitors are fascinated by our living heritage, from centuries-old traditions like Eisteddfodau and male voice choirs to the resilience of post-industrial communities and our proud sporting legacy.

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- **Small Details:** A blanket woven from local wool, the sound of a harp in the background, the scent of bara brith in a tearoom – these are the sensory cues that create atmosphere. It's in the little things that sense of place truly shines.
- **Staff Knowledge and Training:** Front-line staff play a huge role in shaping a visitor's experience. Make sure they know more than just their role. Help them confidently suggest local highlights, like where to buy a Welsh Love Spoon, find the nearest market, pharmacy, or enjoy a good coffee and cake. A well-informed team makes guests feel welcome, supported, and part of the local story.

Wales is a place that invites discovery, emotion, and connection. When businesses embrace and showcase what makes them local – whether through people, products, food, design, or language – they don't just attract tourists; they create advocates. Let every interaction tell a story. Be bold. Be proudly Welsh.

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Building Long-Term Success – Start your journey with the travel trade today

Working with the travel trade is more than just a sales strategy – it's a long-term investment in the growth, resilience, and reach for your tourism business

Whether you're an attraction, accommodation provider, experience host, or food and drink stop, becoming trade-ready opens doors to new markets, repeat business, and stronger visibility – both domestically and internationally.

By offering competitive trade pricing, building relationships with trusted partners, and understanding how different trade players operate, you can become part of curated itineraries, group programmes, and FIT journeys that continue to deliver value year after year. With the right preparation, even the smallest businesses can thrive through trade partnerships.

Ultimately, the travel trade acts as an extension of your team – helping you tell your story, sell your experience, and welcome more visitors to Wales. Focus on quality, consistency, and collaboration, and you'll find that working with the trade doesn't just grow your bookings – it grows your reputation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Travel habits are changing; many international travellers are now building multi-destination trips that combine cities, countryside, and coast. That means your experience doesn't need to be a full-day attraction to be included, it just needs to fit well within an itinerary.



Tips from other businesses

Southern Wales recently held a webinar focused on working with Travel Trade – you can find the video on the website

www.southernwales.com

Here are key points from some of the speakers.

Jo Nugent, The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny (House of Caradog) Head of Sales & Marketing

Key points:

- Personal touches from welcome to departure
- Sense of Place and personal recommendations
- Ease of accessibility – through communication, planning, clarity and simplicity at every stage of the visit

Stephen Griffin, Griffin Guiding Tour Guide

Key points:

- Quality assured tours with a professional guide
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Benefit from local knowledge and networks

Sarah Higgs, Parkway Hotel and Spa Sales & Marketing Manager

Key points:

- Communication
- Flexibility
- Getting the basics right
- Giving that Warm Welsh Welcome

THE ANGEL HOTEL, ABERGAVENNY



ROYAL MINT EXPERIENCE



DYFFRYN GARDENS



Aled Rees, Cambria@ASA Business Development

- **Be Trade-Ready with Clear Pricing:** Offer net or commissionable rates, and ensure your terms (group sizes, cancellation policy, seasonality) are simple and consistent across all trade partners.
- **Build Relationships, Not Just Listings:** Attend trade events (or work with someone who is attending), follow up promptly, and maintain regular contact with tour operators, DMCs, and GTOs. Personal, professional relationships lead to long-term business.
- **Think Long-Term, Not One-Off:** Don't focus only on large groups or single bookings – many trade partners deliver steady, reliable business across the season. Flexibility and good communication make you easier to work with and more likely to be included in future itineraries.

Paul Brandwood, Royal Mint Experience Business Development Manager

- **Don't be afraid to ask for feedback from group operators and organisers on what they are looking for or what you can do better.**
 - You can use this when you market to groups as NEW or IMPROVED
- **Ensure your offer and pricing is clear and benefits the organisers.**
 - Easy to book (one call or e mail) packages with partner attractions or experiences can encourage multiple bookings.
- **Group exclusive options are key to drive visitors.**
 - Lunch packages at a preferential rate when booked with admissions,
 - Packages that are only available to groups (at additional costs). For example, we offer a guided tour, guided exhibition, "Strike Your Own" coin & cream tea package as an exclusive group ticket.

DID YOU KNOW?

Experiences that feel exclusive, local, and small-scale are highly desirable to international FITs (Free Independent Travellers). Even something as simple as a one-hour storytelling session, local tasting, or meet-the-maker moment can add major value.

Working with Southern Wales Tourism and your local Destination Partnership

Southern Wales Tourism is a collective campaign involving all the local authorities from Monmouthshire to Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff. The Group and Travel Trade sectors are recognised as a key part of the area's tourism economy and the Southern Wales team focus considerable effort on keeping tour operators and GTOs up to date with what is on offer.

Southern Wales Tourism is a member of relevant travel and tourism trade bodies and regularly attends key travel trade shows. Please keep your local authority tourism officer and Southern Wales Tourism updated about your business, any new products, experiences, awards and reviews that are relevant to this market so we can promote these on your behalf and help ensure your inclusion in future itineraries and other projects.

To find out more about the specific support available to tourism businesses in your area, contact your local tourism officer via the relevant email address shown.

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Useful Contacts

Southern Wales Tourism

Visit@southernwales.com

Bridgend County Borough Council

Tourism@bridgend.gov.uk

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Alyson.tippings@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Caerphilly County Borough Council

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Cardiff City Council

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Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

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Monmouthshire County Council

Tourism@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Newport City Council

Tourism@newport.gov.uk

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

TourismEnquiry@rctcbc.gov.uk

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Tourism@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

To find out how to work with Visit Wales, visit

<https://traveltrade.visitwales.com/working-with-travel-trade-wales>



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www.southernwales.com