

International Tourism Toolkit



Of the 33 million tourists who came to the UK in 2013, half of them visited a museum during their stay. Although many UK museums welcome significant numbers of visitors from abroad (1 in 10 overseas visitors go to the British Museum), many non-national museums lack the necessary expertise or resources to engage with and benefit from the international tourism market.

Introduction

This toolkit is the result of a project aimed at increasing the sustainability of non-national museums outside central London by raising awareness of the potential for attracting tourists from Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC countries). The project was funded by the Arts Council England Museum Resilience Fund and managed by the British Council. The information in the toolkit was gathered by the partners in the project: Birmingham Museums Trust, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Culture Coventry, Freud Museum, Horniman Museum, Manchester Museum, People's History Museum, and SS *Great Britain*.



The toolkit aims to support museums in developing a better understanding of the international tourism market. It is divided into three sections:

1. Understanding international tourism: sources of information, advice and support
2. Understanding the UK bound international tourism market
3. Attracting the international tourism market

The toolkit focuses on making recommendations that museums of any size can follow and which are relevant for museums thinking about attracting international tourists for the first time.

1. Understanding international tourism: Sources of Information, Advice and Support

VisitBritain

VisitBritain (VB) is the national tourism agency, a non-departmental public body, funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and responsible for promoting Britain worldwide and developing its visitor economy. VB has offices in 24 locations around the world, and works with a range of private and public sector partners. The VB website www.visitbritain.org contains a wealth of market intelligence and other information, including market overviews and tourism statistics on a range of countries.

In addition, VB delivers international business events for UK based companies and organisations to promote themselves to the international tourist market.



Destination Organisations

Organisations with responsibilities for local tourism vary in form, function, governance and size but essentially take a lead role for the development of a tourism strategy for a destination. You can find your local destination organisation through these links here:

England: VisitEngland destination organisations

<http://www.visitengland.com/biz/advice-and-support/destination-organisations>

Scotland: VisitScotland information centres

http://www.visitscotland.org/about_us/our_locations.aspx

Wales: VisitWales destination management <http://business.wales.gov.uk/dmwales/>

Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Tourist Board <http://www.nitb.com/>



Other useful sources of information are:

Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA): Has useful information on visitor figures and links to market information <http://www.alva.org.uk/index.cfm>

British Council: The 2014 research publication *As Others See Us: Culture, attraction and soft power* sought to identify what students in China, India, Brazil, Germany and the USA found attractive about the UK
www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/publications/as-others-see-us

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF): The HLF undertook research in 2010 and 2013 into the economic impact of the UK heritage tourism economy www.hlf.org.uk/economic-impact-uk-heritage-tourism-economy#.VUoEII5Viko

National Museum Directors Council: Commissions useful reports on a regular basis www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/resources/





VB events www.visitbritain.org/opportunitiesadvice/events

VIBE (VisitBritain International Business Exchange): an annual event for businesses and organisations to meet the VB trade market specialists from across the world. There are also market specific and travel marketing seminars.

Explore GB: a 2 day event providing UK tourism organisers with an opportunity to meet and do business with over 250 hosted international travel buyers from 40 countries. International delegates are invited to attend familiarisation trips around the UK.

'Destination Britain' missions. Each year, VB run several trade missions to major countries of interest, typically lasting 3-5 days with one-to-one business appointments supplemented by a social programme that provides both formal and informal opportunities to meet with travel agents and tour operators from the market. The key aim is to give an opportunity to gain new business contacts in addition to building on existing relationships. The Destination Britain mission to Guangzhou (southern China) in 2014 included representatives from Historic Scotland, Blenheim Palace, the National Trust for Scotland, SS *Great Britain* and Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum.

2. Understanding the UK- bound international tourism market



Who are they?

The international tourism market covers not just people coming on holiday but also business travel and people visiting friends or relations. 25% of tourism is related to business visits.

Why do they come?

Overseas tourists are attracted to the UK by our culture, tradition and heritage – museums, art galleries, castles and stately homes – but also by our modern city life – fashion, design, film, and music. Pop phenomena like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and globally-exported TV series such as *Downton Abbey*, *Sherlock*, *Call the Midwife* and most recently *Wolf Hall* raise the profile of the UK worldwide. Since the opening of Tate Modern, the UK is now also seen as a key player in contemporary art. And films set in the UK – from *Paddington* to *Far from the Madding Crowd* – showcase specific regions of the UK.

Where do they come from?

Most overseas tourists come from mainland Europe, the USA and Australia. The top ten are:

1. France
2. Germany
3. USA
4. Irish Republic
5. Netherlands
6. Spain
7. Italy
8. Poland
9. Belgium
10. Australia



How do they book their travel?

Most European visitors travel independently, but many tourists from BRIC countries, particularly those visiting the UK for the first time, book their travel through inbound tourism operators, who arrange organised group tours and will handle visa applications, book accommodation and provide transport in the UK. 50% of Russian visitors come in a group, whilst only 20% of Brazilian visitors travel in a group. Increasingly, Chinese tourists are travelling independently. Younger overseas visitors prefer to travel independently rather than follow the routes designed by a travel agency.

Where do they visit?

Over 50% of overseas visitors visit London and virtually all first time visitors to the UK include a visit to London; 94% of the visitors to St Paul's Cathedral are from overseas, but only 2% of the visitors to Tate St Ives in Cornwall are from overseas. Tourists on their first visit to London tend to tick off the most famous sights: the British Museum, the London Eye, Madame Tussauds and the Tower of London. For a second visit, they are more likely to visit areas outside London.

The top five towns visited in the UK are:

1. London
2. Edinburgh
3. Bath
4. Oxford
5. Cambridge

How do they travel around the UK?

Group travel will normally be in coaches or by train. Most independent travellers travel by train, as many overseas tourists prefer not to hire cars because of the cost of petrol and because of their concern about driving on the 'wrong' side of the road.

When do they come?

Though Easter is traditionally the start of the tourism season, and summer seeing the largest number of tourists, many tourists from overseas visit during the winter months, particularly those from the southern hemisphere (India, Latin America, etc) .

How much do they spend?

In 2013, overseas tourists spent £21 billion in the UK. The average spend per head was £640, but tourists from Brazil, Russia, India and China typically spend considerably more as they tend to stay a longer time in the UK and be keen to take souvenirs back home.



GREAT China Welcome www.visitbritain.org/greatchinawelcome

The aim of the GREAT China Welcome programme is to make the UK the destination of choice for the rapidly growing China market. The number of Chinese visitors to the UK has doubled in the last five years and there are hopes that it will treble again by 2020, with a more relaxing visa system in place, an increasing number of independent Chinese tourists and a growing awareness in the UK of the needs of Chinese tourists. The China Welcome website contains useful information on effective communication, how the Chinese travel industry is organised, culture and etiquette.

3. Reaching the international tourism market

To be successful at attracting the international tourism market, it will help to develop an **international tourism strategy** for your museum. This should reflect the capacity of your organisation and an understanding of the existing international tourism market in your area. Don't try to be too ambitious; it's better to build up a strategy gradually.

It helps to start with some baseline research:

- What are you doing now to attract the international tourism market?
- Where are your overseas visitors coming from?
- What attracted them to visit your museum?

Your strategy should aim to cover the following areas:

- Overseas audience (existing and new)
- Marketing
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Visitor Needs and Expectations

Your strategy might include ideas as simple as developing a joint offer with a local hotel or offering mid-week evening openings to encourage business tourists to visit, or more long term such as participating in a VisitBritain mission to meet inbound tourism operators or offering foreign language audio guides or apps at your museum.



Marketing

National and Regional marketing strategies: Talk to your local destination organisation about their international marketing strategy, and be aware of national marketing strategies, such as the UK GREAT campaign, particularly the GREAT China Welcome www.visitbritain.org/greatchinawelcome/ (see Appendix 2).

Local research: talk to your local tourist information centre, hotels, restaurants and cafes, shops and train and bus operators etc to understand where overseas tourists visiting your region are coming from and whether the market is for visitors on holiday, on business or visiting friends and relations.



Website: Many overseas tourists do their research online before coming to the UK, as accessing the internet is expensive when travelling, so having pages in other languages will make it easier for them to see what you have to offer. Embedding Google Translate www.translate.google.co.uk into your website is a quick and easy stop-gap.

Make sure your website and promotional literature offer a list of the **Top Five Things** to see during a visit to your museum or a guide on what to see if time is short. The British Museum offers a useful guide to what to see in an hour: www.britishmuseum.org/visiting/planning_your_visit/object_trails/1_hour.aspx

Other points to highlight for an international audience are:

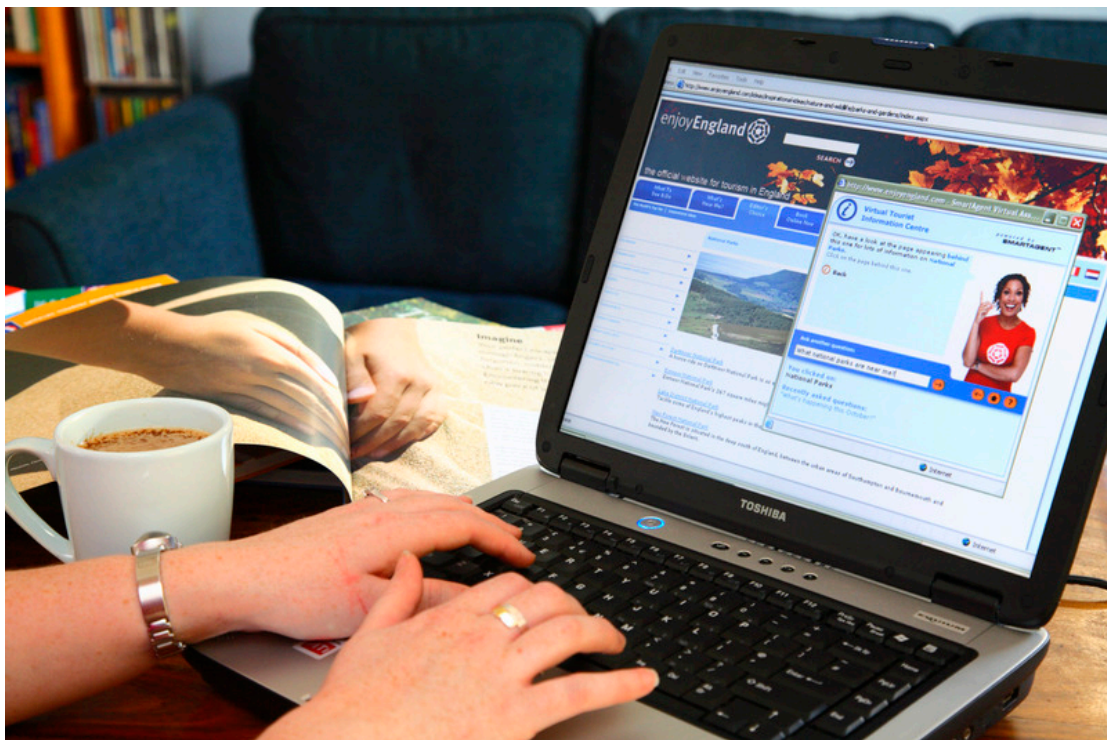
- Transport connections (nearest train station, bus station etc) with an indication of travel time (ie 'Bristol is only an hour and a half by train from London').
- Map showing your location within the UK
- Free admission (if offered)
- Free wifi (if offered)
- Your retail and catering offer. Many museums in Russia and China, for example, don't have shops or cafes
- Safety. We take this for granted but safety is particularly attractive for Brazilian tourists, as personal security in public spaces in Brazil can be an issue.
- Connections to royalty, celebrity or films/TV series. Films such as *Paddington* and TV series such as *Downton Abbey* and *Call the Midwife* have encouraged 'set jetting' tourism.

Social Media

VisitEngland offers an online marketing toolkit for engaging customers through social media: <http://www.visitengland.com/biz/advice-and-support/businesses/promoting-your-business/online-marketing-toolkit/engaging-customers-through-social-media>

Some tips:

- If your museum offers free wifi, that will encourage your international visitors to share their experiences with friends and family, and so raise your profile in their own country.
- Set up profiles on various overseas social media platforms such as Sina Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter, which reaches around half of the Chinese population
http://www.visitbritain.org/Images/Digital%20and%20Social%20Marketing_tcm29-40993.pdf.
- Follow overseas cultural institutions on Twitter. And it doesn't have to be museums! The Horniman Museum tweeted about its 'Superb Owls' during the US Super Bowl Sunday www.horniman.ac.uk/get_involved/blog/superb-owls-super-bowls
- Track feedback on social media platforms and online travel blogs and sites (e.g. eueueu.com and Qiongyou.com).
- Embed online social media platforms/links on 'official websites' and current social media sites.
- Connect online with international alumni from local universities.



Partnerships

Bear in mind that a visit to a museum is only part of the holiday experience. Visitors will also stay in local hotels and bed & breakfast accommodation, eat in local restaurants and cafes, and visit other local attractions, so think about working in partnership with hotels, tour operators, local train operators, other attractions, restaurants etc to attract foreign tourists and developing a joint offer. For example, SS *Great Britain* and M-Shed in Bristol do joint marketing as they are both located on Bristol's waterfront and Blenheim Palace cross markets with the Bicester Village outlet shopping destination.

It's also worth keeping in touch with your local **Airbnbs** as research has shown that visitors who use Airbnbs are keen on experiencing culture www.airbnb.co.uk .

Working with inbound tourism operators: Ask your local destination organisation to provide contacts for inbound tourism operators bringing international tourists to your region so that you can ensure that your museum features in their itineraries. And consider taking part in one of the VB events in the UK which will enable you to meet face to face with inbound tourism operators (see Appendix 1).

Community Engagement: There are over 300,000 overseas students studying in the UK, with over 50,000 undergraduate students from China. Contact your local university and invite the overseas student associations to visit your museum. Graduation ceremonies typically attract families of students to spend a holiday in the UK around the time of graduation. Foreign students could also be recruited as volunteers; they could translate promotional material for you or offer tours in a foreign language.

Local language schools also provide you with a local international tourist audience.

Work with your local communities to attract tourists visiting friends and family.

Visitor Experience and Expectations



What do overseas visitors want?

- **A warm welcome;** train your staff to be welcoming to visitors from other countries, particularly those who don't speak English. Do a survey of languages spoken within your museum – you may be surprised by how many languages your staff can speak.
- **An authentic and unique experience:** it could be a chance to handle historic artefacts, dress up in historic costume, ride in a horse and cart or just eat a cream tea.
- **Information in their own language.** Audio tours are high on the wish list of many non-English speaking tourists.
- **A link to their own country:** Overseas tourists are unlikely to visit an exhibition about their own culture, though they will be interested in artefacts or collections with a connection to their own country, such as the Sultanganj Buddha in Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwTn0m--GXg .
- **Photo opportunities** are important, particularly for Chinese visitors.

- **A range of food in the cafe.** Chinese visitors prefer not to eat sandwiches so think about offering salads and soup at lunchtime. Chinese visitors also tend to bring their own tea, so providing hot water in the cafe, rather than just cold, will be appreciated.
- **Flexible opening times:** if business travel is a significant factor in your local region, think about offering flexible opening times.
- Many overseas visitors prefer to use **credit cards**, particularly if they are travelling to more than one country. If you attract a significant number of Chinese visitors, think about accepting China Union Pay.
- **A wide price range in the shop.** Chinese visitors like to buy a number of small gifts for their colleagues at home. Russians are amongst the highest spending tourists in the UK and want gifts, rather than cheap souvenirs, and also like to buy local foods.



Top Ten Tips

1. Research where your existing international tourists are coming from
2. Understand what sort of tourists they are (holiday, business or family and friends)
3. Talk to your local destination organisation
4. Explore joint marketing with local hotels, restaurants and cafes, train operators etc
5. Review your website and ensure it includes the 'Top Five Things' to see or do
6. Embed Google Translate into your website
7. Stress your local train connections; most tourists travel by train.
8. Highlight any connections your museum has to royalty, celebrity or films or TV series
9. Build links with overseas students studying at local universities
10. Think about taking part in one of VisitBritain's UK events



Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Arts Council England for funding the project, to VisitBritain for advice and encouragement, to British Council staff in the UK, Brazil, Russia, India and China for supporting the study tours, and to the project partners:

Birmingham Museums Trust

Andrea Fox
Marketing Manager

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Kate Newnham
Senior Collections Officer

Culture Coventry

Gary Hall
Director

Freud Museum

Dawn Kemp
Adviser

Horniman Museum

Victoria Pinnington
Director Communications and Income Generation

Manchester Museum

David Gelsthorpe
Curator of Earth Sciences

People's History Museum

Janneke Geene
Head of Business Development

SS *Great Britain*

Sally Cordwell
Director of Marketing & Communications

ICOM UK

Dr Carol Scott
Museums and Heritage Consultant

NMDC

Katie Childs
Policy and Projects Manager



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



FREUD MUSEUM
LONDON



BRUNEL'S
SS GREAT BRITAIN™



Jane Weeks
Museums & Heritage Adviser, British Council
Jane.weeks@britishcouncil.org
July 2015