

# ASK THE experts

Laura French canvasses those in the know for their top tips on selling to solos

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# 1 “Build up a local database by advertising solo offers”

Darryl has been in the travel industry for 19 years, working with some of the UK’s biggest tour operators. In 2018, he joined solo travel specialist Just You, and now works as a personal travel consultant at Cartwright Travel in South Wales.



**Darryl Gardner**  
personal holiday expert, Cartwright Travel

“The solos market is well worth targeting – retired solos [in my client pool] will, on average, travel four times a year, so if you have 40 solo travellers on your database, that’s potentially 160 holiday bookings per year.

It’s a growing market and we’re very fortunate that more escorted touring operators are now catering for solos with dedicated departures. Cruise companies are offering excellent rates on cabins for solo passengers and many hotels are offering single-specific rooms. My monthly conversion remains strong for solos enquiries – in August I confirmed 90% of customers who reached out.

When it comes to destinations, India is still on everybody’s list, and forward bookings for 2022 and even 2023 are strong. In Europe, Italy remains a top seller, partly because the Italian hoteliers have been ahead of the game for many years in offering no-single-supplement rooms.

My biggest piece of advice would be to use operators who avoid single supplements where possible. MSC Cruises, Newmarket Holidays, Jet2holidays and Saga are consistent performers who really go out of their way to keep costs down.

In terms of targeting new clients, my top tip would be to try to build up a small database in your local area by advertising one or two solo offers per week. Once you get one solo booked, the word will spread and hopefully you will see regular bookers who won’t take long to convert.

# 2 “Highlight the plus points of travelling solo”

Phil has been chief executive of Riviera Travel since October 2019, overseeing the company during the pandemic. The operator has resumed its tours and cruises again, including several solo-specific itineraries with no single supplements.



**Phil Hullah**  
chief executive, Riviera Travel

“Our experience is that people of all ages are increasingly travelling the world alone – not just to satisfy their wanderlust, but because solo exploration and adventure can build self-confidence, whatever a person’s stage of life. So it’s important to highlight these advantages when selling to solos.

We often hear that the best thing about solo travel is that it offers guests the freedom to go their own way – to travel when they want, where they want and for however long they want.

To keep pace with demand, we place a clear emphasis on solo travel, with no supplements on our single cruises. We continue to add more cruises and tours to our solos programme, and our Douro and Danube river cruises are proving particularly popular.

To help people feel at home we have welcome drinks on our river cruises, so guests get to meet one another and socialise as they wish. But for anyone unsure about a holiday on their own, we recommend opting for an organised group tour. These offer guests a compromise between having independence and the reassurance of an expert.

A holiday is a refreshing experience, and can be very empowering too. Guests can return home with a new perspective on life; what could be more revitalising than that?

# 3 “Listen to customers’ individual needs”

Nadia has worked as the sales manager at Solos Holidays for the past year and has been in the travel industry for more than 15 years, experiencing many different countries along the way. The operator sells tours, cruises, city breaks and other holidays targeted at solos.



**Nadia Price**  
sales manager, Solos Holidays

“The UK staycation has boomed in all categories since the pandemic, and our most popular solos holidays are now our three-night UK leisure, golf and walking breaks. We are also experiencing a good recovery in winter-sun holidays and experiential tours, including our Greece and Croatia sailing programmes.

The average age of our customers is 55-plus. They are normally either single and looking for sociable company or their partners have different interests from them.

Solo trips are great because guests get to mix with like-minded individuals who have similar tastes in the type of holiday they enjoy. Booking a package through a singles operator not only offers financial protection but a reliable service from start to finish. For most of our customers, this will be their first ‘taste of freedom’ for nearly two years, so additional support is essential.

Our advice for anyone selling to the solo market would be to make sure you select the right holiday type for your customer. Don’t forget, one person’s idea of a fabulous holiday is not necessarily right for another, so taking the time to listen to their individual needs and wants is a must to understand their reasons for a solo holiday.

We also strongly advise that you select tour operators that include a tour leader, as they are the magic ingredient that make a good holiday truly memorable.