

# ASK THE experts

Mature travellers are an ideal audience for guided tours, so boost your sales with these top tips, writes **Alice Barnes-Brown**

## 'Tie in with TV travel shows'

Richard Forde is head of trade sales at Newmarket Holidays, focusing on growing partnerships with travel agents across the UK. He has worked in travel for 24 years, starting aged 21 as a photographer on Royal Caribbean ships.



**Richard Forde**  
head of trade sales, Newmarket Holidays

**How to sell:** Mature travellers choose escorted tours because they want someone to be there every step of the way. They also want to visit lots of locations and get off the beaten path. So they appreciate the ability to make a single reservation that includes multiple hotels, tours and transfers, reducing the time that comes with piecing an itinerary together themselves.

Tours can include a huge range of attractions, activities and events, with operators leveraging group rates and buying power to secure the best options. Agents can break down the costs then price up individual elements with the customer to



PICTURE: Elvis Presley Enterprises Inc

highlight the outstanding value of a tour. Another element that can appeal to mature travellers is the social aspect – travelling with a group of like-minded people is great way to make new friends.

**What's hot:** Several of our long-haul tours always sell well, including Elvis Presley's Memphis, New Orleans & Nashville and our African safaris – proving that mature travellers don't lack a sense of adventure.

**Top tip:** Customers love a celebrity travel programme, so agents should link their advertising, email communications and social media posts to recent and forthcoming TV shows. Travellers want to follow in the footsteps of Jane McDonald in Japan, Gregg Wallace in South Africa or Joanna Lumley on the Silk Road – and an escorted tour is often the easiest way of doing that.

## 2 'Emphasise value for money'

Hayley Morris leads a team of area sales managers who actively engage with Titan's trade partners. They look after account management for head office's trade relationships to help agents secure sales.



**Hayley Morris**  
head of trade, Titan Travel

**How to sell:** This is a discerning market. They're experienced travellers and know what they like. Value for money is important – it's not about getting something for the cheapest price, but getting the most from the money they are spending.



PICTURE: Shutterstock/mcpman

We grade our trips, so people can see how active they are and make a decision based on that.

**What's hot:** Our Far East and Southeast Asia tours have been hugely popular in the past year. Destinations such as Japan work perfectly as a tour because there's so much to see, so having an expert guide who speaks the local language is invaluable. Other popular destinations include the US, Canada, India and Australia.

Seasoned travellers are seeking out new and unique destinations. We've observed an

increasing trend among customers reserving once-in-a-lifetime experience tours, featuring extraordinary activities and remarkable sights.

**Top tip:** Clearly outline all the elements included in the tour package, such as meals and excursions. It's also important to make the point that they'll be travelling with fantastic tour guides who really know the region and will be able to show them the best of it. Don't forget to reassure customers that there is downtime built into the itineraries for them to spend as they choose.

## 3 'Ask about birthdays or anniversaries'

Matt Herbert is responsible for leading the product teams and developing and implementing strategy across the Leger Holidays and Shearings brands.



**Matt Herbert**, production manager,  
Leger Shearings Group

**How to sell:** Mature customers might want to take that big holiday they've always dreamed of to celebrate an anniversary or significant birthday. Agents can give them confidence to



book by providing details of which cities they're going to visit, where they're going to stay and what meals are included.

Find out the customer's must-haves and nice-to-haves. Do they want to fly out to a certain place, or do they want to join a coach in the UK? An agent might not know everything about an operator's offering or adaptations for mature travellers, so check our website or call to see what suits your client's needs – our experts don't mind answering questions.

**What's hot:** 'Grand Explorer' holidays – such as Spain and Portugal and Highlights of Eastern Europe – have taken off. Since Covid, people have more to spend because they didn't go away for a couple of years. Agents can hone in on that.

**Top tip:** I ran agencies in a previous life, and I used to say: "You need to get excited about what [the customer] is excited about." Booking is the first part of the holiday. Sometimes, we see customers that are multi-bookers within the year, often booking both longer and shorter tours.