

# Unleash the niche.

Plug into clients' passions with a special-interest tour, writes **Joanna Booth**



Whether your clients are retirees who join clubs connected to their favourite hobby or millennials

scrolling through an Instagram feed curated around their personal passions, identifying what themes make your customers tick is a good way to sell them more holidays.

Special-interest tours are now so common that some of them hardly feel niche any more. Walking, cycling and food-themed itineraries are ubiquitous, but even if your database includes people with less commonplace pastimes, you should be able to find something to suit.

A special-interest tour could give you an opportunity to identify new customers, provide an excuse for an existing client to book an extra trip,

or even dispel hesitancy about a type of holiday – perhaps those who haven't taken an escorted tour before or have never tried travelling solo.

## WELLNESS

In some respects, wellness tours are nothing new – think how long those pilgrims have been heading to Lourdes – but from a traditional travel perspective, hotel stays have dominated the wellness holiday market. Now G Adventures is appealing to those who love the idea of yoga classes, healthy food and mindfulness but also want to explore beyond a single centre, and include sightseeing as well as wellness.

Tours are available in destinations as diverse as Italy, where itineraries feature guided meditation and farm-to-table Tuscan cookery classes; Iceland, ➤

# DESTINATIONS

## ESCORTED TOURS | SPECIAL INTEREST



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Stand-up paddleboarding yoga in Costa Rica; kayaking off the Isle of Skye; Dresden opera house, Germany; volunteering in Ecuador

PICTURES: Shutterstock; G Adventures

for yoga in national parks and mantras on black-sand beaches; and Costa Rica, where travellers can try stand-up paddleboard yoga on Lake Arenal and volcanic mud treatments in the Rincón de la Vieja National Park.

**Book it:** G Adventures' eight-day Wellness Costa Rica tour starts at £1,124 including accommodation, activities and some meals.  
[gadventures.co.uk](http://gadventures.co.uk)

### CLASSICAL MUSIC

Kirker is an established player in the cultural touring market, but also specialises in itineraries with a classical music focus. Alongside its own music festival, it creates itineraries around other events, including Glyndebourne, Lucca's Puccini Opera Festival and Germany's Schubertiade.

There are also trips that combine cultural sightseeing with musical performances, such as Kirker's Opera & Art in Dresden itinerary, which includes performances of *La Boheme* and *Il Barbieri di Siviglia* in the city's imposing opera house, plus guided walking tours, museum visits and wine tasting at a Saxon castle.

**Book it:** Kirker's five-night Opera & Art in Dresden, departing April 22, 2020, starts at £2,272, including flights, accommodation, some meals, opera tickets, sightseeing and guiding.  
[kirkerholidays.com](http://kirkerholidays.com)

### ACTIVE TOURING



Hiking and cycling tours are fairly standard stuff these days, but there are more-niche activities out there. For those who want to improve their map reading, Ramblers Walking Holidays has three and four-night Navigation and Hill Skills breaks in the Lake District, packed with practical instruction. KE Adventure Travel offers climbing itineraries in the Alps and farther afield, with options for beginner mountaineers right up to experts. Wilderness Scotland runs trips exploring the coastline by kayak and rivers by open canoe, again with trips for all experience levels. For horse enthusiasts, try Equestrian Escapes and In The Saddle – the latter has options ranging from trail riding and ranch holidays to horse riding safaris and learn-to-play polo experiences.

### VOLUNTEERING

Voluntourism was once the province of the gap year, but now clients don't need six months to spare to lend a helping hand while on their holiday. Contiki's Me to We trips include working with a charity on sustainable development projects, as well as enjoying more traditional touring activities.

In Ecuador, guests venture into the Amazon not just to explore the rainforest and spot wildlife, but also to spend a day working with the local community on whatever project is most pressing – perhaps building a new classroom. Boat trips, nature walks and a shamanic ceremony ➤

ASK THE expert

"Within the Specialist Journeys family, we find our clients range from those who already know their field to people looking to discover a new interest. It might feel intimidating to give advice on a specialist area, but if you don't know your wisteria from your clematis, or your Greek temples from your Roman villas, the key is finding someone who does. The teams at Brightwater Holidays and Andante Travels really know their stuff and are always happy to help."

Jackie Willis, chief executive, Specialist Journeys



are also on the itinerary, plus sightseeing in Quito and Guayaquil, and outdoors adventures in Baños.

**Book it:** Contiki's seven-day The Lava Line with Me to We starts at £1,035 including accommodation, transport and some meals. [contiki.com](http://contiki.com)

GARDENS

Tempt green-fingered clients out of their own backyard with the chance to see some of the world's greatest gardens through a specialist operator such as Brightwater Holidays. You can start small, with short UK tours, and then build them up to touring the horticultural highlights of Japan, South Africa or Costa Rica.

If they need convincing to take an escorted tour, look for itineraries with USPs including special access to private gardens, tours led by expert gardeners, and departures that coincide with festivals or events.



ABOVE: Gardens at the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, French Riviera

Brightwater has two departures of its French Riviera itinerary, one visiting Menton's lemon festival, the other the International Rose Festival in Grasse.

**Book it:** Brightwater Holidays' six-day Gardens of the French Riviera, departing February 20,



starts at £1,395, including flights, accommodation and some meals. [brightwaterholidays.com](http://brightwaterholidays.com)

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological tours delve deeper than a standard cultural trip, with itineraries that would usually be considered too full-on and history-focused for the lay traveller. They also tend to be led by an expert rather than a tour leader – typically an academic that lectures on the destination in question.

Peter Sommer Travels specialises in archaeology tours, with trips to Greece, Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Ireland and the UK. The operator's Easter In Athens tour suits both first-timers and frequent visitors to the cradle of civilisation, offering the chance to observe the rituals and celebrations of Greek Orthodox Easter as well as the city's wealth of historic sites.

**Book it:** Peter Sommer Travels' eight-day Easter in Athens itinerary, departing April 13, 2020, starts at £2,895, including full-board accommodation and expert guiding. [petersommer.com](http://petersommer.com)

GRAND PRIX

A sporting event can be the sole reason for travel, or a catalyst that moves a client to book a tour in a country they've long had on their bucket list. With their well-heeled fans, rugby and cricket tend to bring Brits to cheer on their team in exotic destinations.

But don't forget to add motorsports into this mix, with Shearings offering a tour to see the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The tour includes tickets to practice and qualifying rounds as well as the Formula One race at the Yas Marina Circuit. Clients will get entry to the pit lane walk, after-race concerts and Ferrari World, plus an Etihad Race Pack filled with memorabilia.

**Book it:** Shearings' six-day Abu Dhabi Grand Prix tour, departing November 27, starts at £1,969, including flights, accommodation and tickets. [shearingsagent.com](http://shearingsagent.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Solar eclipse; Acropolis, Athens; Abu Dhabi Grand Prix; Ferrari World, Abu Dhabi

PICTURES: Shutterstock; Marlen Taffarello; Jorge Ferrari

ECLIPSES

While spotting the northern lights has become ubiquitous, those who want sky-high bragging rights have turned to another natural phenomenon – a solar eclipse, where the moon passes between the Earth and the sun, obscuring part or all of the sun and plunging some areas of the planet into minutes of darkness during the day.

Explore has a range of tour departures in Sri Lanka, India, Oman and Sumatra to coincide with an annular eclipse (where the sun maintains a 'ring of fire' outside the moon's shadow) on Boxing Day this year, and itineraries in Patagonia, with the chance to watch the total eclipse on December 14, 2020, with an astronomer.

**Book it:** Explore's 10-day North Sri Lanka – Eclipse trip, departing December 20, starts at £2,970, including flights, accommodation, some meals and sightseeing with a tour leader. [explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk) TW

## INCREDIBLE INDIA TICKS ALL THE BOXES

Bringing together a unique blend of sights, sounds and spirituality, India has a distinctive flavour that flows through every experience your customers might encounter, while exploring its rich tapestry of wonders. The vibrant energy of its people will undoubtedly provide them with a warm welcome, whether that's to the sunny shores of Chennai to the south, the snow-capped Himalayas to the north, or anywhere in between across its diverse, sprawling landscape.

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