

## DESTINATIONS

ESCORTED TOURS | ATAS



**CLAIRE BRIGHTON**

ATAS ACCOUNT DIRECTOR

INTERVIEW BY Katie McGonagle

**Q. You're kicking off the first Atas Touring & Adventure Month this week – what can agents expect?**

A. We wanted to focus attention on our sector and let agents and their customers know why touring and adventure is a great choice as we come out of the pandemic and beyond. We know many agents have been out of their businesses for a considerable time, so we wanted to allow those on furlough to take part in training to prepare them for a return, while those who are working can take part in networking, training and more. We'll also be providing travel agents with an extensive toolkit to promote the touring and adventure sector.

**Q. What can you tell us about the restart of touring and adventure travel?**

A. We had an exciting few months last year when some of our members were able to restart some tours, and received great feedback from guests on the measures that had been put in place. We still need further information from the government before we can confirm any restart dates, but our members have adapted their holidays in many ways, including more UK options, small-group or private departures and 'single location' tours, where guests are based in one hotel and tour the area from there.

**Q. What protocols will be in place once touring can resume?**

A. The touring and adventure sector was one of the first to announce,



introduce and test new measures during the short restart. All our members have taken a similar approach to safeguard their guests. They include training tour leaders in enhanced hygiene and social distancing so they can ensure standards are met from staff, guests, hotels and restaurants, and sanitising vehicles prior to and during a trip, with hand sanitiser freely available. We are also seeing some members implementing further conditions, such as Saga only accepting fully vaccinated passengers and Cosmos requiring proof of a vaccine or negative test. Atas has produced a handy guide, which can be found on our website.

**Q. Have you seen a change in the tours people are booking?**

A. Our members are seeing significant increases in UK and Ireland bookings, active trips such

as walking and cycling, and tours that stay longer in one place. During the pandemic, we have seen people getting involved with their local community and I believe this is why we have seen a rise in interest in responsible tourism. People are beginning to understand the positive impact tourism has on destinations and want to engage with other local communities.

**Q. What can agents do to increase sales of the sector?**

A. Touring and adventure holidays remind me of cruise and ski, in that sometimes agents are less confident if they haven't experienced the product – but we can help with that. Atas has some great resources including training, an agent toolkit, webinars and more, and if we

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### CLAIRE'S TOP TIP

Why not promote a tour on your social media or shop window? Choose one tour so you can really bring it to life, ensure your team understand it and have the confidence to sell it – then once you've done one, you can start introducing more.

haven't got something you are looking for, get in touch. Membership is free to agents so there's nothing to lose. We have training videos for agents who are new to the sector, and for those with more experience, we will be developing

advanced modules. If you are an experienced agent, you may already know what types of tour work for your customers so why not focus on a particular area such as solo travel, and make yourself the 'go to' solo travel specialist in your area?

**Q. Where will be first on your list once touring restarts?**

A. Maybe Croatia and Montenegro, and when we are able to go a bit farther afield, Japan, Vietnam and Cambodia. Wherever I am, I love to experience local culture and food so a local cooking class is right up my street!

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