



Young *at heart*

The mature market can be a lucrative one if you know how to upsell, writes Laura French

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Accommodation, flights, insurance, car hire... there's a lot to think about when packaging up a holiday, and things can get that little more complex when it comes to older travellers with additional requests and expectations.

But shy away from this market at your peril. Higher budgets, increased time and the willingness to fork out for added comforts all mean the over-50s bracket can be a lucrative one.

Whether it's suite upgrades, add-ons, bolt-on excursions, celebration packages or other extras, there's a wealth of upselling opportunities you can capitalise on to boost your commission and strengthen client relationships at the same time.

▶ AIRPORT UPGRADES

First things first - look to the upgrade opportunities. Business-class flights are an obvious choice for mature travellers with a decent budget, but if that's beyond their parameters then suggest premium economy as a halfway house, says John Parker, product manager at Premier Holidays. Wider seats, extra legroom, upgraded meals, bigger TV screens and priority boarding are all key selling points worth dropping into the conversation.

Comfort needn't be restricted to the flight itself, though; airport lounges can be something of an oasis in packed airports. "We always suggest airport lounges to our mature clients travelling



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long-haul," says Parker. "And those who have done this previously are generally keen to include it again."

Getting to the airport in the first place with multiple bags in tow can be half the battle, of course, especially for clients travelling by train. If that's the case, suggest a luggage transfer service. AirPortr collects and

checks in bags straight from home for those living within the M25 and around Heathrow and Gatwick (when flying with certain airlines), with prices from £30 for one bag or £40 for up to four. "This has proved incredibly popular with older travellers, who no longer have to worry about transporting luggage or queuing at check-in," says chief executive Randel Darby.

Even if clients don't want to fork out much, there are other lower-cost extras available. Holiday Extras offers fast-track check-in to avoid queues from £3, for example, cutting waiting times significantly and making the journey a little smoother, while helping you boost the value of the package that bit more. [➔](#)



▶ HOTEL ADD-ONS

Once clients are in resort, there's a whole host of add-ons that can make their stay more comfortable.

If it's space and privacy they're after, suggest upgrading to a room that allows access to the hotel club lounge. These can include everything from afternoon tea to evening cocktails and canapes, so guests can save on food and drink while enjoying an extra level of comfort.

AMResorts, for example, has a Preferred Club service across its Secrets, Dreams and Now brands, offering an exclusive lounge with daily continental breakfast, afternoon hors d'oeuvres, liqueurs and in-room newspapers. Certain resorts also offer Preferred Club-only services like private restaurants, pools and bars.

"The key message here is the availability of calm, upmarket havens accessible throughout the holiday," says Malcolm Davies, product destination manager for Funway Holidays.

But for mature travellers wanting to really up the luxury, there's only one thing for it - an upgrade to a suite, of course. Increased space, private pools and butler service can all help seal the deal for those with budget to spare, so highlight these plus points to mature clients, especially those celebrating special occasions, says Karl Thompson, Sandals and Beaches Resorts' managing director for the UK and Europe. "If it's a special-occasion trip



If it's a special-occasion trip, most guests are happy to spend a little extra to make their holiday even more memorable

like a birthday or wedding anniversary, most guests are happy to spend a little extra to make their holiday even more memorable," he says.

And if they are celebrating a big day,

suggest adding a special package to bolster the booking value that little more with the likes of in-room flowers, champagne and spa treatments.

Warner Leisure Hotels ups the game further with VIP packages offering a priority-position table during evening entertainment, plus complimentary drinks, a dedicated waiter and, in its Platinum option, the chance to meet the star of the show (from £60 per person, including half a bottle of champagne). They also offer early check-in and late check-out for an extra fee (from £10 per room), which is worth recommending for older clients in search of extra flexibility. ▶



PICTURES: PETE GUTTERIDGE; MURRAY SCOTT; PETE MASON

ABOVE:
No 1 Lounge,
Heathrow

ABOVE RIGHT:
Luggage transfer
service AirPortr

RIGHT:
Warner Leisure
Hotels' Nidd Hall
Hotel



ASK THE EXPERT



Dave Sharman,
commercial
director,
Newmarket
Holidays

“The mature traveller can find some destinations a little daunting, so a tour can be a good solution. Some travellers like help with practical things like hotel check-in and luggage, but more than that, the tour manager can help with decisions on where to visit and when for the best experiences. They also share a few secrets, such as the best places to eat depending on your taste and budget, and can help with the local language.”



LEFT:
Titan Travel's
door-to-door
transfer service

RIGHT:
Panoramic
Balcony Suite
on APT's
AmaBella

BELOW:
A Leger
Holidays
Luxuria coach



ON TOUR

It's not just hotels that can be upgraded, of course. For those heading off on a cruise, suggest a cabin upgrade, says APT's national sales manager, Jessica Shelton-Agar. “By staying on the middle or upper cabin decks, guests will often have a balcony option as well as easier access to many of the amenities on board, such as restaurants and lounges,” she says. “These benefits are ideal if too many stairs are a challenge.”

There are plenty of other upgrades to be found on cruises and tours. APT offers Luxury departures that include drinks, tips and more, while Exodus Travels has Premium itineraries with added luxuries and upgraded accommodation. Leger Holidays has its own range of extras, including its Silver Service range – providing more-comfortable coaches plus portering at hotels – and its new Luxuria Signature Collection, featuring

higher-end accommodation and extra coach facilities such as personal touchscreen TVs and wider seats. Intravel, meanwhile, offers upgraded versions of its most popular walking trips, with stays in locations such as a Renaissance mansion in Siena and Villa Bled in Slovenia.

Don't forget the practicalities either. Something as simple as highlighting a home pick-up service could be enough to close a booking. Leger passengers living within 20 miles of a joining point can pay a small fee for a home pick-up, while Shearings Holidays provides a similar service with its Home Connect option (available free on certain trips, and for a small charge on others).

Saga includes VIP door-to-door service on all long-haul holidays and selected Europe tours and river cruises, while Titan Travel offers return door-to-door transfers with drivers – making for an excellent selling point on touring product more generally.

GOING IT ALONE

Booking a comprehensive travel insurance package is a must, says Seamus McCauley, head of communications at Holiday Extras. “Mature travellers can often require a greater level of cover, particularly if they have any pre-existing medical conditions,” he says. Holiday Extras offers policies from £50, based on an over-65 travelling in Europe with a pre-existing medical condition.

And if clients want to hire a car, recommend one they can pre-book so it's all planned before they arrive. Affordable Car Hire offers commission to agents and can arrange for the car to be delivered to the client's hotel – helping travellers avoid having to navigate after a tiring flight. Affordable also offers an excess refund policy, meaning customers can reclaim any excess they'd have to pay in the event of an accident – providing that all-important peace of mind. **tw**

