



SIZE MATTERS

Choosing how many people your clients tour with requires an understanding of both product and person, says [Joanna Booth](#)

The phrase ‘one size fits all’ doesn’t apply to touring holidays. One person’s sociable is another’s stifling, and what some see as seclusion, others find isolating.

You may find your clients’ desires have shifted post-Covid. Some may want to book private tours with friends and family. Others, feeling cooped up after long lockdowns, will be keen to interact with new travel companions.

Happily, there’s such a breadth of touring product that you’ll be able to find a trip that fits them perfectly.

GET SOCIABLE

“After two years locked away from other people, the social element of traditional tours is a huge draw, and we are certainly seeing that reflected in our sales,” says Paul Melinis, APT’s managing director. “Many within our customer demographic – the 65-plus traveller – have missed the camaraderie of group touring.”

It’s not only the mature market that craves social connection. In a G Adventures survey, 64% of those aged 18-34 said they’d like to try a hostel experience and meet other travellers. As a result, the brand partnered with Hostelworld to launch Roamies, a new range of small group, action-packed adventures for that age bracket.

Themed tours are a successful way of ensuring that clients find company they enjoy, according to Leger Holidays; the operator’s battlefield tours have created many lifelong friendships among those with a passion for military history.

PERFECT PROPORTIONS

Clients can choose between traditional tours with larger groups – between 25 and 40 people – or small groups, of 10

or 12. Riviera Travel offers classic and small group touring, and head of strategy and innovation Will Sarson says both have benefits: “Customers who like to mingle prefer a classic group, with the opportunity to strike up conversation with different people each day. Classic tours also offer great value for money.”

However, the operator launched small groups in 2020, and these have proven particularly popular with first-time tourers. Newmarket Holidays is forecasting significant growth for this tour type, and including Peru, Borneo,



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the Galapagos and African safaris as particularly suitable for smaller groups.

Small groups let each client have more interaction with the guide, and tend to offer a higher level of cultural immersion. InsideJapan keeps all its groups small, allowing them to stay in traditional *ryokan* guest houses, visit small *izakaya* pubs, use public transport and visit artisans’ workshops.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

For some, the ‘escorted’ part of escorted touring is the draw, particularly in the more complicated world of post-Covid travel, and Wendy Wu Tours reports that travellers who’d previously preferred to go it alone are now seeking the safety of a guided group. “The guide’s role has become more integral, not only to make the experience exceptional but also

provide that level of confidence and security,” says Glen Mintrim, chief executive at Wendy Wu Tours.

Even those who still don’t like the idea of a group can benefit from the services of a guide, whether it’s one to accompany their private tour, or with local guides stepping in for certain activities.

Wilderness England has introduced a new model for its cycling holidays, called Self Guided Plus. While clients will cycle independently, a Wilderness team member will drive a support vehicle, transfer luggage, offer navigation advice, provide drinks and snacks during the day, and clean and service bikes when they stop for the night.

GOING ALONE

Group travel is particularly popular for solo travellers.

Contiki reports solo travellers are now its main customer type, with bookings increasing 10% year on year.

Sarah Weetman, sales director for solo specialist Just You, says sharing experiences and meeting like-minded companions is key for her customers. “Many also love the fact that we offer plenty of free time to explore independently, but also have a knowledgeable tour manager on hand,” she says.

Post-pandemic, some travellers wish to holiday in their bubble. Private tours allow couples and families to spend quality time together, and personalise their trip. Tailormade touring specialist Audley Travel reports that clients crave total control and exclusivity, but enjoy the benefits of a trip designed and organised by experts.