

# Entering the European market for community-based tourism (CBT)

Last updated:

08 June 2023

Europeans are increasingly seeking authentic travel experiences that have a positive impact on the communities they visit. Community-led projects must also be sustainable and while luxury is not required, for homestays there are basic standards that must be met. In Europe, CBT experiences appeal to a wide range of demographics and the key sales channels include tour operators, online travel agents (OTAs) and direct sales. The number and range of CBT experiences is increasing throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, and there are many associations working alongside communities to promote unique, authentic experiences to a broadening consumer base.

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## 1. What requirements must community-based tourism comply with to be allowed on the European market?

By law, the European tour operator market must comply with a number of regulations to ensure their clients are safe and financially protected when travelling. To do business with the European market, you have to meet their expectations and align your business processes with theirs. They will expect you to meet conditions they set in a code of conduct and/or terms of business. As sustainability in all areas of tourism services is mandatory for all European tourism suppliers, you must embed sustainability in your business.

### What are the mandatory and additional requirements that buyers have?

The mandatory and additional requirements for community-based tourism (CBT) tourism services are the same across the sector. They include:

- The European Package Travel Directive
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Liability Insurance and Insolvency Protection

You can learn more in the CBI study [What are the requirements for tourism services in the European market?](#) This study helps you understand the legal, non-legal and sector-wide requirements that European tour operators have to comply with. If you know these requirements and can adapt your business to meet their needs, they will be more likely to do business with you. It is important that European buyers can trust their suppliers to meet their own and their customers' needs.

## Embedding sustainability

Making sure your tourism business is sustainable is a key and urgent step. The purpose of sustainable tourism is to increase the benefits and reduce the negative impacts of tourism. Sustainable tourism includes:

- Protecting the natural environment, wildlife and its habitats and other natural resources when planning, developing and managing tourism activities.
- Providing tourist experiences that are authentic, so that distinctive culture and heritage are preserved and celebrated.
- Empowering local people and communities through employment, economic independence and skills development.
- Sustainable tourism and CBT are also closely aligned with regenerative tourism. This refers to tourism practices that leave a place in better condition than it was before. The CBI study on [regenerative tourism](#) explores this concept of 'building back better'.

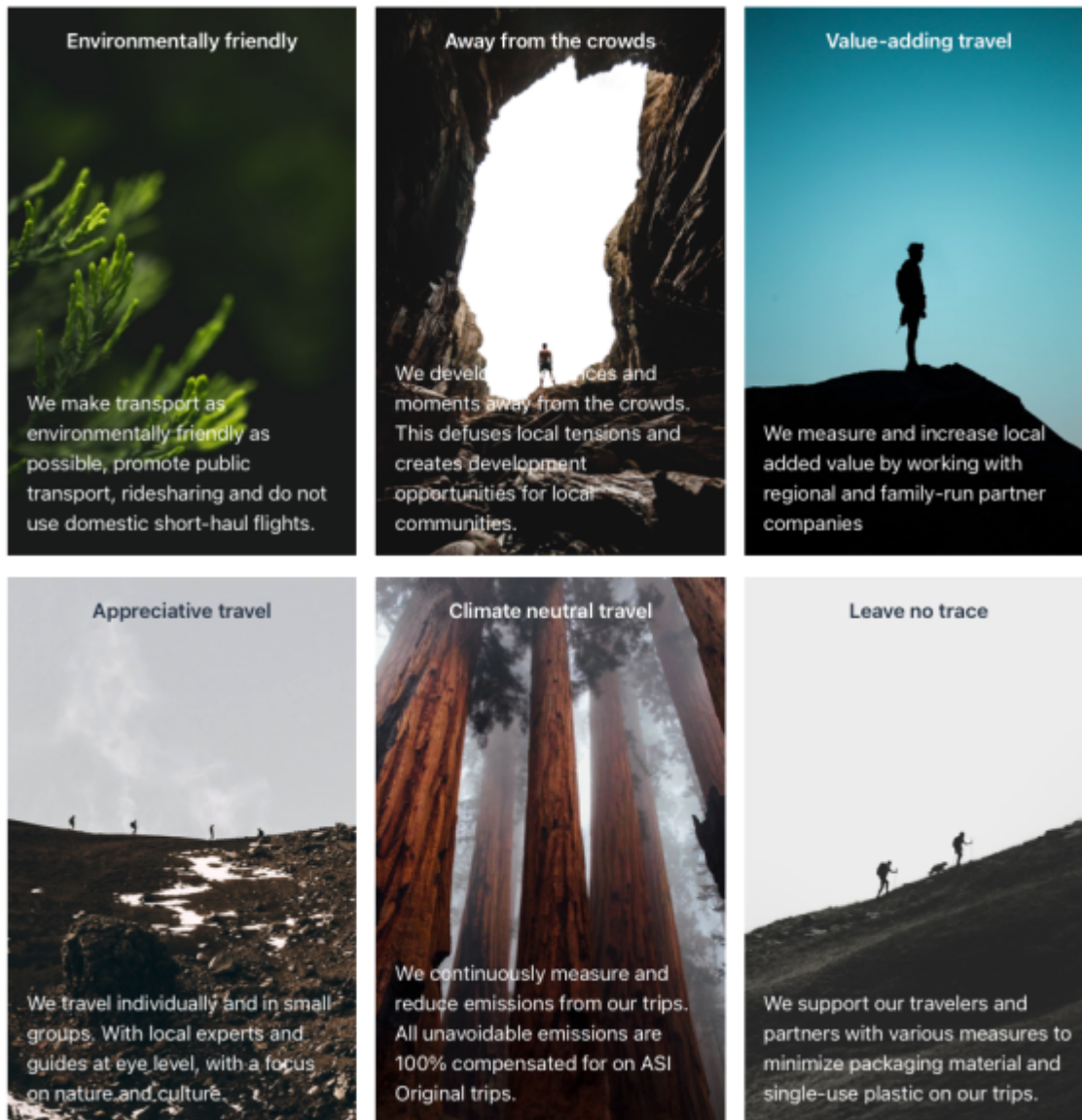
The EU Green Deal was launched in 2019 with an important package of actions to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. This directly affects SMEs in developing countries that want to sell their products on the European market as they have to meet higher sustainability standards to satisfy the criteria. Read the CBI study [The EU Green Deal – How will it impact my business?](#) to understand how the EU Green Deal will impact your business.

As a consequence of the EU Green Deal, more and more European tour operators will only work with suppliers that are certified or can provide sustainability credentials. For instance, the German tour operator ASI Reisen intends to work only with sustainably-certified suppliers as from 2024. You can read how they describe their sustainability philosophy in figure 1 below.

Sustainable tourism is directly related to CBT. If you do not put sustainability at the centre of your community-based business, you will not succeed in this niche.

Figure 1: ASI Reisen – sustainability philosophy

## Our philosophy when it comes to sustainability



Source: ASI Reisen

### Tips:

Download the detailed CBI study [How to be a sustainable tourism business](#). It provides an explanation of what sustainable tourism is, details of sustainability certification schemes and some practical advice on how to make your business sustainable.

Consult the CBI study [10 tips to go green](#) to learn how to make your business more environmentally friendly.

## What are the requirements for niche markets?

Requirements for the CBT niche market are closely linked to sustainability and responsible tourism. Important requirements are establishing standards, possibly applying for sustainability certification and good management. Building strong partnerships and working with other organisations that have expertise in the CBT

sector is also important for CBT success.

However, not all CBT is the same and you have to define what your project is. For instance:

- Is the community in an area of rich biodiversity, offering birding, fungi or flora tours?
- Is it in an area with rich cultural heritage, showcasing traditional lifestyles?
- Is it involved in wildlife conservation in national parks?
- Who is your experience suited for? For example, for families with young children or teenagers?

Defining your offering is important because you need to know who to target in order to market your product effectively. For examples, take a look at some of CBI's niche market reports such as on [bird watching](#), [cultural tourism](#), [ecotourism](#), [food tourism](#) and [wildlife tourism](#).

## International standards and certifications

The [Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#) has developed the globally recognised baseline standard on which many other internationally recognised sustainable tourism standards are based. One of the best-known examples is [Travelife for Tour Operators](#), which is widely recognised in Europe. It is also a more affordable certification scheme for SMEs in developing countries.

[Travelife for Accommodation Providers](#) is an equivalent scheme for tourism accommodation providers.

The [Good Travel Seal](#) focuses on practical sustainability requirements that are easy for smaller businesses to manage, and is less costly to implement. It provides a business performance scorecard to share with tour operators and guests. It is a good starting point for tourism businesses and community organisations aiming to be certified at GSTC level.

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has a range of standards for the tourism sector. [ISO 21401:2018 – Sustainability management system for accommodation establishments](#) supports accommodation providers of all sizes to improve their environmental impact, promote social interactions and make positive contributions to local communities.

Many countries have developed their own standards for CBT or published handbooks to support communities that want to set up their own projects. These all offer good tips, hints and ideas for communities and stakeholders involved in CBT planning and in developing and managing CBT projects.

- [ASEAN Community Based Tourism Standard](#) (PDF) – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). A comprehensive standard that can be applied to different types of CBT projects. It helps communities understand the quality of service needed to assure tourists a consistent level of quality and service across all ASEAN-endorsed CBT activities.
- [Community-Based Tourism Enterprise Handbook](#) (PDF) – Caribbean Tourism Organisation. Provides information about how to start, operate and promote a CBT business in the Caribbean.
- [Community Based Tourism Partnerships – Handbook for Tour Operators](#) (PDF) – Thailand Community-based Tourism Network Coordination Center and Thailand Community-based Tourism Institute. This guide is for tour operators looking to support and market CBT projects.
- [Community-Based Tourism Facilitation Manual](#) – International Trade Centre. A useful manual that takes you through the steps needed to create a CBT project. Also see the infographic below.
- [Community-Based Tourism Social Innovation Playbook](#) – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab, Thailand. This toolkit was published in August 2022 and is designed to help communities already involved in CBT develop their programmes to be more sustainable and resilient. It outlines three clear steps: assessing and learning from the past, looking towards the future and putting plans into action.
- [Handbook on Community Based Tourism – How to Develop and Sustain CBT](#) (PDF) – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Developed to guide stakeholders in deciding if CBT is suitable for a community and can be sustained long-term.

- [Myanmar Community-Based Tourism Standards](#) – Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MOHT). CBT is widespread in Myanmar and these standards were established to support communities setting up CBT projects in different local situations. Minimum standards and levels of rights, capacity and quality together serve to strengthen confidence for stakeholders and visitors.
- [Responsible Community Tourism Development Manual Part 1](#) (PDF)PDF and [Part 2](#) (PDF) – Planeterra. Provides a strategic approach to developing a CBT project and uses real-life experiences to illustrate development.
- [Vietnam Community Based Tourism Handbook](#) (PDF) – WWF Vietnam, and ESRT Programme. Designed as a practical reference guide. Covers each stage of project development and gives practical tools and tips. For communities, organisations that support communities and private sector organisations seeking to partner with communities.

Figure 2: Steps to develop a CBT project



## Tips:

Study the examples mentioned above to learn more and see what you can adapt for your CBT project.

Consider getting some online training in sustainable tourism. The International Trade Centre offers free [Community-based Tourism Training of Trainers \(CBT-TOT\)](#), with three online courses a year. Participants receive a certificate upon completing the online final test with a pass score of 70% or higher.

Communicate your standards and sustainable actions to visitors so they know they are making a valuable contribution.

## Invest time to develop partnerships

Partnerships are important in CBT and offer communities many benefits. Generally, the most successful CBT projects are developed by communities and other organisations working together. Partners can help in a number of ways. For example, by applying for funding for infrastructure projects, training, marketing expertise and networking. Partners in the CBT sector can include community organisations, tourist boards, tour operators, development agencies and also other local communities.

The [Vietnam Community Based Tourism Network \(VCBT-N\)](#) is an example of an association that helps local communities develop CBT programmes. Their website lists a wide range of network-supported [programmes](#) that are open for visits. Another example is the [Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism Association \(KCBTA\)](#), which unites 15 communities in providing unique tourism experiences.

The WWF is an example of an international NGO that partners with communities all over the world. [Read about some of the projects with communities](#) that they support.

Planetterra has launched a new [Global Community Tourism Fund](#). This fund provides small grants and mentors community tourism organisations to help them develop quality CBT experiences. Contact them to find out if you are eligible to apply.

## Tips:

Find out if there is a CBT association in your country and contact them. They may have a website. CBT associations are keen to find and work with local communities and will be happy to hear from you.

Make a list of other potential partners, including local tour operators, hotels, the tourist board and wildlife and/or conservation organisations. Who you include will depend on the community initiatives you want to develop, such as conservation, wildlife tours/management, volunteering, coffee/chocolate/fishing or other kinds of tours, the local economy and local handicraft skills.

Find out if there are other local communities nearby that are already offering or planning to set up a CBT programme that you could partner with.

Join [Planetterra](#), the Global Community Tourism Network that helps CBT organisations and projects develop their business. It is free to join and gives you access to online learning and a network of similar businesses around the world.



## Practical requirements for authentic CBT projects

The most important requirement for CBT projects is that they are authentic and real. This means the experiences you offer visitors must accurately reflect the community's lifestyle, culture and traditions. CBT projects must offer a warm welcome and interesting cultural and nature-based experiences delivered with confidence by local people. Inspiring storytelling can make or break a CBT experience.

CBT travellers are looking for immersive experiences in cultures that are different from their own through hands-on, unique experiences. However, it is crucial to them that their tourism contribution has a measurable positive impact on the local community and does not negatively impact the environment or offend any local cultures or customs.

The below tips from a CBT marketing expert can help to understand how to deliver an immersive experience through the stories you tell.

Figure 3: Top tips for ethical marketing through community storytelling

### THE 5 TOP TIPS FOR ETHICAL MARKETING THROUGH COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

*When you take a picture, record a video, write a message to the future guests of your community...*

- BECOME THE PROUD STORYTELLER OF YOUR COMMUNITY**  
*Your voice and the stories of your community matter. Your history and values should be visible to tourists because that knowledge will prepare them for meaningful human encounters.*
- KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE AT THE CENTRE**  
*Don't change your message to adapt it to what you think tourists want to hear and see. Stay true and authentic to yourself and your community.*
- SHARE ALSO WHAT SEEMS OBVIOUS AND NORMAL TO YOU**  
*Your daily life activities, the things you do and the way you do them are exactly what interests your visitors. Don't overlook anything. Every rock has a story.*
- SHARE THE IMPACTS OF YOUR CBT PROJECT IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
*Use your marketing to show the positive impacts of the CBT experience on environmental conservation and cultural preservation, as well as in terms of socio-economic benefits and well-being for the local population.*
- MAKE PUBLIC ONLY WHAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE SHARING ABOUT YOUR CULTURE**  
*Your culture and ancestral tradition are not commercial objects and you and your community should only share what you have consciously, and independently, chosen to share with the travellers.*

Source: Elisa Spampinato, Communication and Marketing Consultant for CBT Projects, [Traveller Storyteller](#)

CBT projects should be well-located and accessible. Ideally, they lie within 90 minutes of existing tourism routes, as CBT travellers often like to do a variety of activities on one trip. If you can offer or provide access to additional activities outside your CBT project, it may enhance visitor satisfaction. Examples include:

- Guided trips to a local wildlife park or other animal encounters.
- Visits to local attractions such as historic and/or archaeological sites or museums.
- Access to trekking, hiking and/or cycling trails in local parks or nature reserves.
- Visits to local festivals, markets or other local CBT projects.
- Access to soft and hard adventure activities, either land-based or water-based depending on where your project is located. For example, bungee jumping, canoeing/kayaking activities, balloon safaris, sandboarding, rafting and cruising.
- Nature-based activities such as turtle watching, birdwatching, trips to hot springs and fishing.

For CBT experiences including accommodation, it is important to CBT travellers where they sleep at night. It need not be luxurious, but has to be of a good simple standard as well as safe and secure. A high level of cleanliness is essential. Basic facilities are acceptable as long as you provide the following minimum standards:

- Beds must have a mattress and pillows with clean bed linen and towels provided. Provide a mosquito net if possible and necessary.
- For CBT travellers on all budgets, access to private and clean bathroom facilities is essential. Toilets must be in good working order.
- Provided they are clean, more basic sanitary facilities are acceptable, such as a 'hole in the ground' toilet and a bucket of water for showering/washing.
- For CBT travellers on high-end holidays, accommodation and facility standards need to be higher. Accommodation may have to be purpose-built and bathroom facilities provided en-suite. Make sure you know which type of travellers your facilities cater to.
- Any food provided should be simple, locally produced/grown and safe to consume. Do not serve food that imitates European (or any other international) cuisine, though you can adjust dishes to European tastes if it may be too spicy.
- Provide vegetarian and vegan options if you can. Vegetarianism and especially [veganism are growing trends in Europe](#) today.

### Tips:

Always ask visitors for feedback on your CBT experience and to rate it from bad to good. This lets you address any problems, make changes and get good ideas. It is important to know if visitors felt your experience to be authentic and satisfying and could see how the community benefits.

For more tips and advice about setting up a CBT project, download and read the [Operational Guidelines for Community-Based Tourism in South Africa](#) (PDF). This helpful, detailed guide provides a step-by-step approach to developing a CBT programme.

## 2. Through what channels can you get community-based tourism products on the European market?

### How is the end market segmented?

CBT travellers are often described as 'adventure tourists'. They like immersive, authentic experiences and learning about different cultures and lifestyles. CBT travellers cross all the main consumer groups of [baby boomers](#) (born between 1946 and 1964), [Gen X](#) (born between 1965 and 1980) and [millennials/Gen Y](#) (born between 1981 and 2000). Their behaviours differ according to how much money and time they have to spend on travel.

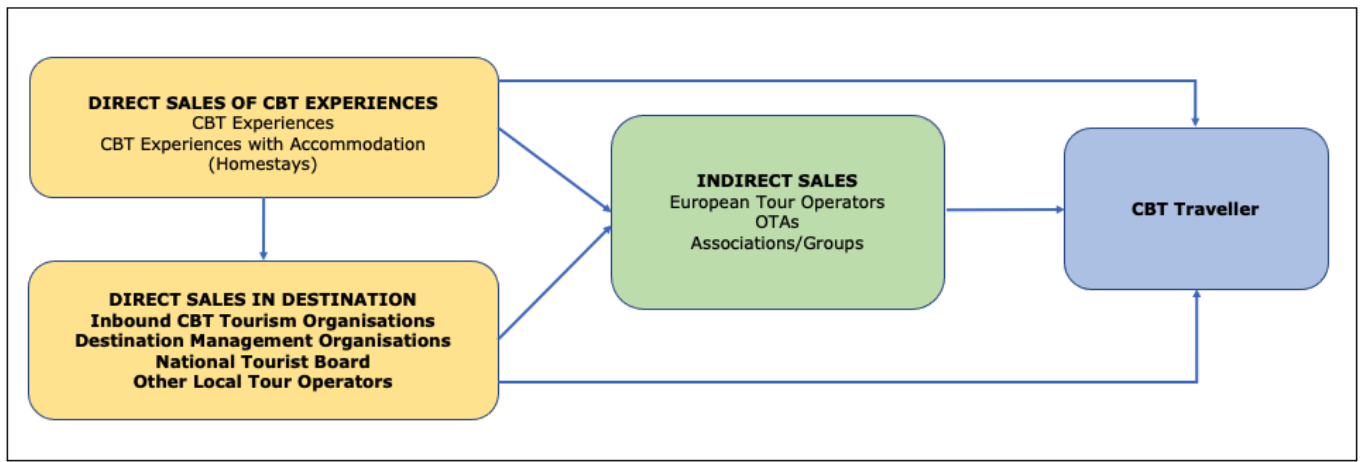
To learn more about CBT and adventure travellers, download the CBI study, [The European market potential for community-based travel](#), and see [Section 1: Product description and end-market segmentation and consumer behaviour](#).

### Through what channels do community-based tourism products end up on the end market?

The main sales channels for CBT products to the European market are local tour operators and other tourism organisations, and direct sales online or offline. Indirect sales are made via European tour operators and online travel agents (OTAs).



Figure 4: Sales channels for CBT products



Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Direct sales are sales made by communities through websites or by phone or walk-in sales. These are often homestays and ecolodges. For instance, [Casitas Tenorio B&B](#) in Costa Rica.

CBT experiences are often sold at the destination to CBT travellers through local tour operators, local destination management organisations (DMOs) and CBT tourism organisations. Examples of specialist CBT organisations include [Boliviandando](#), the Bolivian Network of Community Solidarity Tourism, and [COBATI](#), the community-based initiative of Uganda. European tour operators often work with these organisations to add CBT experiences to a trip.

Indirect sales are sales made to European tour operators, OTAs and other associations or groups, which then sell them to European travellers.

European tour operators often package CBT experiences in scheduled or tailor-made tours. Buyers usually work with a local CBT organisation or DMO in the destination. See the table below for examples of European tour operators that sell CBT experiences in key source markets. The UK has the biggest market for operators specialised in cultural and adventure trips.

OTAs are the fastest growing sales channel for travel experiences. There are many of them and so it is a large competitive market. Two of best known are [Viator](#) and [Airbnb Experiences](#), which promote many CBT and local experiences. See the table below for OTAs specialised in CBT and responsible tourism.

Other associations/organisations that serve the SAVE (scientific, academic, volunteer, education tourism) and ecotourism sectors are also good sources for buyers. [BETA \(the British Educational Travel Association\)](#) connects many SAVE travellers with the UK travel sector.

Table 1: Examples of European tour operators and OTAs that sell CBT

Country/operator
Tour operators

France:

[Absolute Travel \(Absolu Voyages\)](#) – small group travel

[Culture Contact](#) – small group travel and tailor-made travel

[Nomade Aventure](#) – small group travel and tailor-made travel

Germany:

[Akwaba Afrika](#) – tailor-made travel

[Diamir](#) – package and tailor-made travel

[Ivory Tours](#) – small group and tailor-made travel

Netherlands:

[Better Places](#) – tailor-made travel

[Koning Aap](#) – small group travel

Spain:

[Tarannà Viajes con Sentido](#) – responsible/sustainable travel

Sweden:

[Jambo Tours](#) (in Swedish only) – package tours

[Kenzan Tours](#) (in Swedish only) – tailor-made travel

UK:

[G Adventures](#) – small group travel and SAVE

[Nomadic Tribe](#) – small group travel, specialises in indigenous communities

[Tribes](#) – tailor-made cultural holidays

OTAs

[Earth Changers](#) – sustainable tourism

[EawWith](#) – food experience platform

[I Like Local](#) – locally-run travel experiences

[Lokal Travel](#) – rural CBT experiences

[Much Better Adventures](#) – specialises in adventure trips that directly benefit local communities

[ResiRest](#) – social enterprise business-to-business (B2B) OTA for local food experiences

[Responsible Travel](#) – sustainable and responsible trips and experiences

[Socialbnb](#) – accommodation platform for sustainable rentals

[Traveling Spoon](#) – food experience platform

[Intrepid Urban Adventures](#) – city-based local experiences

International associations

**International Community Tourism Association (ICTA)** – platform for CBT associations and programmes. Listing is free.

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

### **Tips:**

Read the CBI study on [the European market potential for community-based tourism](#) to learn more about the European market. You will see that Germany, the UK and the Netherlands are your major markets.

Learn more about European tour operators that sell CBT as part of wider adventure trips. Consult the CBI study 'Entering the European market for adventure tourism', and read the section: [Through what channels can you get adventure tourism products on the European market?](#)

Read the CBI study on the [European market potential for SAVE tourism](#) to learn more about this niche market.

### **What is the most interesting channel for you?**

All the channels named above are worth exploring, depending on the market you want to sell to. Read more about the target segments and use the CBI guides to help you:

- [Opportunities on the European FIT market](#)
- [Opportunities on the European SAVE market](#)
- [Opportunities on the European ecotourism market](#)

OTAs are the quickest route to market but you will have to do your research before doing business with them. You can learn more in the detailed CBI study [How to work effectively with OTAs?](#).

### **Tips for preparing to sell CBT tours to European adventure operators**

If your business is a local tour operator or organisation that provides trips to CBT projects, it is important to know the communities well and build strong relationships with them. To do business with a European tour operator, your expert knowledge of communities you want to promote is the key to your success.

For communities that offer CBT experiences, tourism is usually an additional activity they do on top of necessary daily work such as farming and harvesting. Buyers will want an assurance that the community is not neglecting its everyday running in favour of tourism. If that happens, the experience will lose its value and purpose for both the community and visitors.

Some things you need to do to become fully informed about the communities you plan to work with include:

- Before you visit the community, learn as much as possible about it and the region so you have a clear picture of where it is located and what other attractions may be located nearby.
- Make sure you understand the project's key objectives, such as generating income, empowerment of women, conservation, language learning or promoting youth culture.
- Assess the main CBT activities offered and their duration. Are there any seasonality issues, such as tides or periods of heavy rainfall, such as monsoon?
- Ensure that guides are suitably trained and find out what languages they speak. Ask them to take you on a

tour so you can see what your customers will be experiencing.

- Visit the accommodations to check if they are up to European customer standards.
- Try the food and ask for assurances that it is locally produced, seasonal and safe to eat. If the region's traditional food is very spicy, you might encourage the community to make it less spicy for European tastes.
- Check out local transportation, if it will be used, to determine the safety and reliability.
- Confirm capacity for tours and accommodation.
- Ask about do's and don'ts for every community, so you can pass this on to your customers. It is important that European visitors respect a community's culture. For instance, there may be some European behaviours, such as inappropriate clothing or taking lots of photographs, that may be offensive to the community.

### Tips:

Make sure you can quickly respond to queries, including enquiries and bookings. Aim for a response time of no more than 48 hours (2 days).

Learn more about working with European tour operators. Read the CBI studies [10 tips for finding buyers](#) and [10 tips for doing business](#).

Research and make a list of the OTAs most relevant for you and find out how to get your experience listed. As well as the CBI study on How to work effectively with OTAs, take a look at the arrival guide on [Working with OTAs](#) (PDF).

If you are a food experience operator, apply to list your experience on the [ResiRest](#) platform, which sells experiences to international tour operators.

Build a website, if your business does not have one already. It is common nowadays to use online website builders, who are easy to use and cost-effective. Europeans rely on the internet to find and book trips, so having your own website will give you a competitive advantage. Read the CBI study [How to be a successful tourism company online?](#) to learn more. A Facebook business page is a useful first step while building your website.

## 3. What competition do you face on the community-based tourism market?

### Which countries are you competing with?

CBT is offered in many countries throughout Africa, Asia and Central and South America. This report highlights Colombia, Costa Rica, Kenya, India, Uganda and Vietnam as some of the top competing countries. However, you should also consider other destinations that have successful CBT programmes. They include Bhutan, Cambodia, Chile, Ethiopia, Guyana, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Myanmar, Palau, Peru, South Africa and Tanzania.

Table 2: International tourist arrivals to competing destinations by source market, 2019

	France	Germany	Netherlands	Spain	Sweden	UK
Colombia	86,657	77,162	64,503	129,263	8,024	53,425
Costa Rica	77,013	80,580	34,712	69,745	10,979	78,562

India	247,238	264,973	80,313	83,322	42,318	1,000,292
Kenya	54,979	73,150	37,266	26,398	21,678	181,484
Uganda*	5,604	8,273	9,955	1,892	6,121	33,564
Vietnam	287,655	226,792	81,092	83,597	50,704	315,084

Source: UNWTO; \*2017 arrivals, last available data

## Colombia

After many decades of conflict, tourism is now flourishing in Colombia. During the period of stability since the peace deal in 2016 it has become one of South America's most popular emerging destinations. In 2019, there were a record 4.5 million visitors. By the first quarter of 2022, this number had recovered to 77% of 2019 levels. The new government plans to diversify the economy, targeting the environment and conservation as major growth sectors, with a focus on nature, culture and CBT.

Communities are at the forefront of Colombia's tourism development. Many rural and urban communities are getting involved in CBT initiatives to tell stories about their past and share their vibrant culture. CBT is proving transformational to communities affected by war, and it is now possible to visit areas that were once guerrilla territory. Ex-FARC members are also getting involved in tourism. This is a good example of how tourism can contribute to peace.

The national tourist board website has dedicated pages for Community Tourism and Culture experiences and promotes the friendliness and warmth of the local people. This presents local life as a key reason to visit Colombia. The website is also available in several languages, including Spanish, English, German and French, making it very accessible to Europeans.

## Costa Rica

Costa Rica was an early pioneer of CBT, alongside ecotourism, where it is commonly referred to as community-based rural tourism (CRT). The country is one of the world's leading destinations for community-based ecotourism (CBET), which is characterised by ecolodges in areas of high biodiversity.

The combination of incredible environmental biodiversity and vibrant culture makes Costa Rica a compelling CBT destination. It was also one of the first countries to develop its own sustainability certification programme (CST), which meets GSTC standards. Improving the quality of life for local communities is embedded in the programme.

There were 3.1 million international tourist arrivals in Costa Rica in 2019. 91% of visitors report culture as their top reason for visiting the country and a growing number of them are taking part in authentic cultural activities. Typical examples include homestays and staying in ecolodges, learning about local rural traditions such as the oxcart, nature conservation and experiences with indigenous communities. Read more about how [rural tourism in Costa Rica supports local communities](#).

## Kenya

Kenya has been developing CBT for many years and it is closely related to ecotourism and community-driven conservation. Kenya is best known for wildlife and safaris. This market has evolved to become a conservation-based business model that involves and empowers local communities to care for the land and the animals living there.



Today, there are many examples of excellent programmes that put communities and the future of wildlife and habitats at the forefront of their business. Increasingly, travellers to Kenya are seeking cultural and CBT experiences off the beaten track.

There are many organisations that support CBT in Kenya. [Ecotourism Kenya](#) is Kenya's leading sustainable tourism organisation and has been involved in CBT development for many years. It works to support the integration of CBT into mainstream tourism, helping communities build capacity and explore ideas for tourism within their local areas. The [Kenya Community Based Tourism Network \(KECOBAT\)](#) and the [Federation of Community Based Tourism Organisations \(FECTO\)](#) were established by conservation NGOs. The [Kenyan Association of Tour Operators \(KATO\)](#) has a strong focus on ensuring members operate sustainably.

## India

Responsible tourism has been embedded in India's official tourism policies for many years. CBT is more commonly referred to as 'rural tourism' in India. The Rural Tourism scheme began in the early 2000s to highlight rural life, art, culture and heritage in rural locations and villages and directly benefit communities. Today, villages all over India have rural tourism initiatives to benefit from tourism and interact with travellers.

Rural tourism in India encompasses many types of communities and villages. Partnership organisations that support villages with their rural tourism initiatives are vital. [Village Ways](#) is both a partner and tour operator and works closely with villages to create the right projects to meet their needs. Sustainability and responsible tourism practices are at the forefront of developing community ownership.

In 2021, the Indian Ministry of Tourism developed a [National Strategy and Roadmap for Rural Tourism](#). The strategy's aim is to introduce a new rural circuit as one of 15 themed tourist circuits created under the [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#) in 2014.

## Uganda

Uganda's tourism offering has been focused on wildlife safaris for many years, but now also includes a growing CBT product. Many rural areas have suffered from agricultural declines in recent years. CBT gives communities opportunities to get involved in and benefit from their natural and cultural heritage.

Uganda has more than 50 indigenous languages. Some regions are kingdoms that value the heritage of chiefdoms, and the country's many tribes each have their own distinct cultural values. There are many locations for CBT in Uganda, including Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, which is well known for its gorilla population. The Ankole Cultural Centre in Lake Mburo National Park and the salt plains and fishing villages in the Queen Elizabeth National Park are other popular sites.

Examples of CBT associations in Uganda include the [Community Based Tourism Initiative of Uganda \(COBATI\)](#), an award-winning association that works directly with communities, provides training to women and young people and sets up partnerships, and the [Uganda Community Tourism Association \(UCOTA\)](#), which works with local tour operators to promote CBT experiences.

## Vietnam

Vietnam is a fast-growing tourism destination that welcomed a record 18 million international tourists in 2019. This was one of the highest numbers in the whole Asia Pacific region. Like much of the rest of Asia, which was slow to reopen to tourism after the pandemic, inbound tourism to Vietnam has been slow to recover. Its culture is very diverse and spans 54 ethnic groups and tribes, many of which live in the hills and forests of the northern region.

The Sapa region is home to well-known rural communities and a popular destination for homestays. It has been particularly successful in establishing a flourishing CBT sector. Research shows that 70% of international visitors

to the region want to travel around ethnic villages. Alongside CBT, hiking is a popular activity and several routes and trails have been created. Other interesting community activities include ‘Be a Hmong bride for a day’, ‘Be a Dao farmer for a day’ and weaving and cooking contests.

## Key takeaways:

- Assess how well your national tourist board promotes CBT and local life. Contact them to ask about listing your project. You could arrange for them to visit the community to see it for themselves.
- If you are setting up a CBT project, find a CBT organisation to partner with. Your national tourism board is a good place to make enquiries.
- Contact CBT organisations in your country. If you are a local tour operator, they can help you promote CBT experiences to buyers.
- Keep in touch with your country’s ministry of tourism to stay up to date about tourism development plans.
- Do your own research into CBT projects in your region to see what you can learn from them.

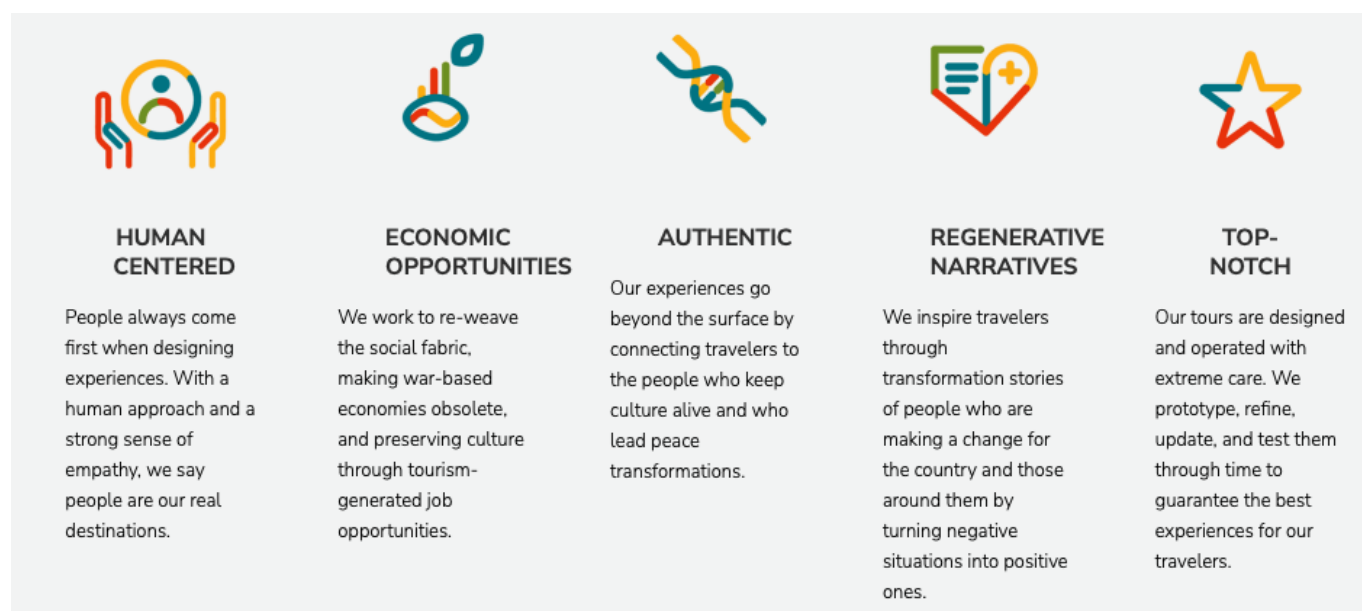
## Which companies are you competing with?

### Companies in Colombia

#### Impulse Travel

Based in Bogota, Impulse Travel works directly with local communities to create tours that are meaningful for visitors and directly benefit communities. The operator works with 20 communities and has generated US\$109,365 for them. Its aims for 2025 are to work with 40 communities and generate US\$400,000. Tours have been developed around their bespoke HEART concept, which stands for human-centred, economic opportunity, authenticity, regeneration and ‘top notch’ (excellent).

Figure 5: Impulse Travel’s HEART concept



Source: Impulse Travel

Impulse Travel offers a good mix of urban and rural tours. Many have been developed to help communities recover after years of conflict. An example is Weaving Peace, an immersive food tour that also tells the stories of changemakers, chefs and artists. Each tour is fully described and includes information about how it creates impact. This is a great way to assure CBT tourists that their money is making a real difference.

[Palenque Tours](#) supports several communities in Colombia, including the Chocó Community Tourism Alliance, located in one of the country's most biodiverse regions. It also supports urban regeneration projects such as in Medellín's Comuna 13, once the city's most dangerous neighbourhood. CBT experiences include visits to cocoa plantations, animal sanctuaries, graffiti tours and jungle trips.

The operator is committed to sustainable tourism and is certified by [TourCert](#). It is also a member of Colombian tourism organisations such as [ACOTUR](#), Colombia's Association of Responsible Tourism (website in Spanish only).

## Companies in Costa Rica

[Rainforest Chocolate Tour](#) is a local tour operator in La Fortuna that operates immersive and authentic tours to learn about the origins of the cocoa bean and its transformation to chocolate through traditional farming methods. The tour covers the history, culture, traditions and flavours of cocoa and is an immersive and hands-on experience. The tour operator promotes sustainability through its support of small business owners and works to promote cultural exchanges and protect biodiversity and community welfare.

The operator is CST-certified and has signed up to Costa Rica's [Code of Conduct](#) to Protect Children and Adolescents from Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. This code is based on the [Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#) created by ECPAT International and UNWTO.

[MARO Experiences](#) offers a wide range of rural experiences, educational experiences and rural accommodations in Costa Rica. Rural experiences include day trips to farms to learn about coffee or sugar cane farming, and multi-day tours including homestays and community activities during the day.

The top five most popular experiences are listed on the operator's homepage, which is a good way to inspire potential visitors. There are also some videos, though only in Spanish. MARO Experiences could reach a wider audience if the videos had English subtitles.

## Companies in India

[Fernweh Fair Travel](#) is a local operator led and managed by women that offers CBT in the Indian Himalayas. Its key objectives are to empower women, young people and communities and to develop sustainability. Its tours combine nature-based adventures with spiritual activities based on traditional indigenous practices. There are a variety of experiences in different villages, which are delivered by specially-trained women, young people and artisan producers.

This operator offers traditional homestays and a boutique eco-retreat with many additional activities closely aligned with wellness, such as yoga, meditation and ancient Himalayan rituals. Offering experiences that fit with ancient or traditional regional practices is a good idea for CBT operators as it differentiates you from your competitors.

[Kabani](#) is a local operator that has been facilitating CBT programmes in Kerala, South India, for more than 10 years. The remote, rural village of Mothakkara faced an uncertain farming future because of climate change and fluctuating crop prices. As the village shifted to a more sustainable farming model, community members were trained by Kabani to offer tourism experiences as a source of additional income for the village.

Five homestays were established, seven guides trained and several workshops for crafts, pottery and music were developed. The village also measured the direct benefits of tourism. In the first year, it welcomed 80 visitors, mostly Europeans, who stayed for a total of 200 nights. There were 140 direct beneficiaries of training and tourism, while another 700 people benefited indirectly from the project via the school and library.

Skills development and knowledge exchange between hosts and visitors was noted to be very beneficial. Another noticeable benefit was the empowerment of village women through their interaction with visitors, which

enabled them to develop various skills. Measuring the benefits of your CBT programme is important to identify what is working well and can be improved.

For more examples of successful rural tourism programmes throughout India, read this blog: [15 Ways and Places to Experience Rural India](#).

## Companies in Kenya

The [Dunga Beach Ecotourism and Environment Community-based Organisation](#) is a youth-led organisation promoting ecotourism and working to conserve the local environment. The local group engages in activities including wetland monitoring, birdwatching, environmental education and awareness raising. For visitors, they offer guided boat trips, birdwatching, walks and craft sales. The group has an educational focus and mainly serves schools, colleges and universities, both domestic and international.

In operation for 25 years, [Il Ngwesi](#) is an ecolodge wholly community-owned by the local Maasai community. All profits from the lodge help to protect the environment and animals living there. The lodge also supports a range of community projects and has received international acclaim for its success in engaging with remote local communities. The operator also offers visits to indigenous communities.

## Companies in Uganda

[Kara-Tunga Arts & Tours](#) is a locally-owned and managed social enterprise in the Karamoja region in remote north-eastern Uganda offering community-led tours and accommodation to visitors. All staff and guides are employed and trained by the organisation with the aim to improve community livelihoods and protect the natural landscape and cultural heritage.

The operator also manages several associated projects. The Karamoja Tourism Academy trains local people to guide tours and provide hospitality. The Kara-Tunga Foundation is a not-for-profit initiative that develops, manages and monitors all of the CBT activities, funded by a conservation levy from the eco-camps.

The website is very professional and provides extensive details about the area, how to get there and activities for visitors. This is very useful for Europeans, who tend to spend a lot of time researching trips before deciding where to go.

## Companies in Vietnam

[Da Bac CBT Project](#) is located just outside Hanoi in mountainous terrain in northern Vietnam. It is a social enterprise established in 2017 to help create sustainable incomes for local families. It now includes three villages, each with its own characteristics and tourism offerings. There are nine homestays, each owned and maintained by a family in the community, in traditional buildings ranging from houses on stilts to long, large wooden houses featuring intricate carvings.

Homestay guests take part in community activities such as traditional textile-dyeing and embroidery, hiking and swimming in the river and visiting local fish farms. All food is locally-sourced and seasonal. Da Bac has its own Facebook page and website. If you have your own website or Facebook page, make sure that they are active.

Da Bac is on the European tour operator Intrepid Travel's [Scenic Vietnam](#) itinerary.

## Key takeaways:

- Make sure you include logos and details of any memberships and/or partnerships you have with other organisations. These include national and regional tourist boards, tourism associations and trade tourism associations. This will enhance your reputation among buyers. Make sure any logos you put on your own website link to the website of that organisation.

- If your tourism product is a homestay, think about adding activities to engage your guests with the local community and landscape. Good examples are guided hikes, birdwatching, yoga or other traditional practices, stargazing and storytelling, learning about local herbs, foraging and cooking.
- If your business is located in a region with special ancient traditional practices, try to include an element of them in your experience. Be sure these are led by an expert, otherwise they will not appeal to tourists.
- Make sure you have a system in place to measure the progress, success and/or problems of your CBT programme. This will help you take steps to make changes where needed.
- Always explain how the project benefits the community. For instance, what is the project's goal and what has it achieved? How many people have been trained, how many families participate in homestays? How has it helped the wildlife population to recover?
- Assess your website, social media pages and other marketing materials. Do they have enough useful information for travellers? Are all the links working? Do pages need updating? Make sure to do regular updates. For more information, read the CBI report on [How to be a successful tourism business online](#).

## Which products are you competing with?

The main competing products for CBT experiences are ecotourism experiences. Ecotourism often involves staying in ecolodges in remote places, areas of biodiversity, conservation areas such as wildlife reserves, or protected coastal landscapes. They are often managed by local communities.

A key difference between CBT and ecotourism products is that CBT adds value through a community-led experience. Immersing visitors in daily community life so they can see and learn things outside their ordinary experience is a good way to do this.

### Tip:

Lean more about ecotourism in the CBI study [What are the opportunities on the European ecotourism market?](#)

## 4. What are the prices for community-based tourism products?

Prices for CBT travel products vary from country to country and depend on the length of the tour, type of activities and whether accommodation is included. There are no standard pricing structures. The table below provides some examples of short tours priced from less than €15 to more than €2,000.

Table 3: Examples of CBT experiences on competing markets, 2023

CBT experiences	Country	Duration	Price per person (€)
Sanjay Colony Slum Tours, Delhi	India	2 hours	14
Traditional Karamoja Healer Tour	Uganda	1 day	23
Highlights & Hidden Gems of Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	3 hours	23



Rainforest Chocolate Tour	Costa Rica	2 hours	28
Mumbai Street Food Tour	India	3.5 hours	28
The 10 Tastings of Hanoi: Street Food	Vietnam	3 hours	31
Dodoth Tribe Cultural Experience	Uganda	1 day	32
Karma Waters Vegan Homestay	Vietnam	1 night	37
Experience Nairobi through the eyes of Street Children	Kenya	1 hour	39
A Night with Karimojong Warrior Nomads	Uganda	1 night	41
Afro Tour in Comuna 13, Medellin	Colombia	5 hours	46
Masai Mara Safari Camp	Kenya	1 night	64
Osa Rural Tours – activities such as cooking calls, community message, wildlife viewing, boat tour	Costa Rica	1 day	72
Overnight Bribri Culture Experience in Yorkin Community	Costa Rica	1 night	92
Cultural & Community Tour at Ngong Women's Centre	Kenya	1 day	120
From Seed to Cup, Bogota	Colombia	8 hours	128
The Essential Kinnaur & Spiti Safari	India	7 days	191
Life as a Local – Travel & Volunteer	India	7 days	219
Vietnam Hill Tribe Trek and Homestay	Vietnam	3 days	259
Tami Lodge and Bio-Coffee Adventure	Costa Rica	4 days	382
Biodiversities and Communities – The Colombian Amazon	Colombia	5 days	387
The Remote Amazon Jungle	Colombia	4 days	508

Kenya Wildlife and Masai Communities Tour	Kenya	5 days	1,634
Gorilla & Chimp Trekking Holiday, women-owned, locally-run	Uganda	6 days	2,220

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Remember that some CBT travellers are prepared to pay more for a CBT experience as they want to help support the community. When setting your prices, factor in all costs before calculating a final price. Also consider other influencing factors such as seasonality.

See the [Pricing your tourism product](#) (PDF) guide for practical step-by-step guidance on setting your prices to boost sales.

### Tip:

For more help on pricing, consult the CBI study [10 tips for doing business with European tourism buyers](#), and see tip 7: [Set a fair price for your services](#).

[Acorn Tourism Consulting Limited](#) carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).