

# The European market potential for water sports tourism

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The water sports segment is broadly grouped into non-motorised water sports (swimming and snorkelling, kayaking/canoeing, windsurfing and kitesurfing, etc.) and motorised water sports (waterskiing, jet skiing, parasailing, etc.). Participants are highly diverse, including both hard adventurers and soft adventurers who choose water sports depending on their interests and skill levels. Recreational water sports like boating and other motorised sports are very popular activities amongst traditional holidaymakers. The European market offers many opportunities for local tour operators to create exciting water sports experiences.

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## 1. Product description

Water sports are defined as sports that are practised on or in water – either salt water or fresh water. There are a huge number of water sports, and they are extremely popular amongst tourists. Some activities require considerable skill to master and involve some degree of personal risk, while others require little skill and are relatively safe. Most water sports require the ability to swim. Water sports can be broadly segmented by non-motorised and motorised activities, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Non-motorised and motorised water sports

Non-motorised water sports	Motorised water sports
Swimming and snorkelling Kayaking and canoeing Surfing Kitesurfing Windsurfing Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) Adrenaline water sports Recreational boating	Towed water sports Motorised water sports

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Activities within each broad niche are further expanded by specialist niches and passion groups. The chart below shows the variety of water sports within each niche. The chart provides an indication only - there are many more specialist niches and passion groups that could be added.

Figure 1: The water sports niche – specialist niches and passion groups



Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

A wider description of each specialist niche is provided below, along with examples of tour operators catering for them in the global marketplace.

Table 2: Water sports niches, definitions and examples of experiences in the global market

Specialist water sports niche	Description of specialist niche and associated passion groups	Example of experience
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## Swimming and snorkelling

Swimming and snorkelling are extremely common and can be practised in the ocean, lakes, rivers and fresh water pools.

Areas with reefs, rocks, underwater caves and grottos, and interesting life underwater make for popular places to snorkel. Wild swimming in rivers and oceans has become more popular over the past few years.

In many destinations, there are opportunities for experiences involving swimming with animals like seals, dolphins, turtles and whale sharks. This should always be done safely and ethically.

Pool sports like water polo, octopush (underwater hockey) and aqua aerobics are commonly offered in resort locations.

Wild swimming is possible all over the world. [Tamuka Travel](#) in Zambia offers a wild swimming tour to Devil's Pool, on the edge of Victoria Falls.

The Mexican peninsula's natural limestone sinkholes, or cenotes, make it a good destination for wild swimming. [Absolute Adventure](#) offers private guided tours to several cenotes.

Indonesia, the Galápagos Islands and South Africa are all destinations where visitors can swim with animals. Read more about this here: [10 amazing animals to swim with](#).

<p>Kayaking or canoeing</p>	<p>Kayaking and canoeing are similar activities. A kayak usually has a closed deck and is propelled by a double-bladed paddle. A canoe is traditionally an open-deck vessel with a one-bladed paddle.</p> <p>Coastal kayaking is a popular activity while on holiday. Kayaking in a river estuary, along the cliffs of a coastal town or amongst mangroves are other typical examples. Whitewater kayaking is also popular.</p>	<p><a href="#">Kayak the Nile</a> in Uganda offers lots of different kayaking experiences, including whitewater kayaking, tandem kayaking, flatwater kayaking and SUP.</p> <p><a href="#">Pineapple Tours</a> in Costa Rica offers a mangrove nature tour by kayak.</p>
<p>Surfing</p>	<p>Surfing involves riding a wave towards the shore while standing or lying on a surfboard. Motorised electric surfboards are also available on the market.</p> <p>Bodyboarding is another form of surfing - one that requires little skill.</p>	<p><a href="#">Surf Berbere</a> offers several packages, including surf and yoga, surf instruction courses, and courses for experienced surfers.</p>
<p>Kitesurfing</p>	<p>Kitesurfers use the wind to pull themselves across the water. The sport is also known as kiteboarding. Wing foiling and kite foiling developed from the same sport.</p> <p>Kitesurfing is regarded as a high-adrenaline water sport that requires considerable skill.</p>	<p><a href="#">Kite World</a> in the Dominican Republic is a local kitesurfing school that offers a range of kitesurfing opportunities, including a <a href="#">kite cruise</a> by catamaran, kitesurfing lessons and other excursions.</p>

<p>Windsurfing</p>	<p>Windsurfing involves a fixed sail on a board. Wind foiling and wing surfing are developments of the same sport.</p> <p>Windsurfing is regarded as a high-adrenaline water sport that requires considerable skill.</p>	<p>The <a href="#">Wind Sports Center</a> in Cape Verde offers surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, wing foiling and SUP. It also hosts 'camps', which include overnight stays in camper vans. The company has a sister organisation in Portugal.</p>
<p>Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP)</p>	<p>SUP involves standing on a board and using a paddle to propel yourself across the water.</p>	<p>SUP is more commonly practised while on holiday. Destinations often promote SUP as an activity, like <a href="#">SUP around Namotu Island</a> in Fiji.</p>
<p>Adrenaline water sports</p>	<p>Adrenaline water sports usually require a level of skill and involve an element of personal risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coasteering involves a mix of scrambling and climbing around a rocky coastline.</li> <li>• Canyoning is similar but in a canyon.</li> <li>• Cliff jumping or cliff diving involves jumping or diving off high cliffs into the water. It is sometimes referred to as tombstoning.</li> <li>• Whitewater rafting involves rafting down a fast-moving river on an inflatable raft. Because of the use of inflatables, rafting is sometimes referred to as tubing.</li> </ul>	<p>Wherever there is a fast-moving river (whitewater), rafting adventures are a popular activity. <a href="#">Bundu Adventures</a> in Zambia offers whitewater rafting on the Zambezi River.</p> <p><a href="#">Bali Tubing Adventures</a> provides tubing adventures on fast-moving rivers in the Ubud region.</p> <p><a href="#">Terhaal Adventures</a> offers several canyoning trips in Jordan.</p>

<p>Recreational boating</p>	<p>Hiring a rowing boat, punt (usually on a river), aqua trike or pedal boat is a fun, low-impact activity that requires minimal skill.</p> <p>A punt is a long, narrow, flat-bottomed boat that is propelled with a long pole from a standing position.</p>	<p>Punting can be done in many destinations around the world, including Botswana and India. In the Okavango Delta, punts (or 'mokoros') are sometimes used in safaris to explore the river system and various islands. <a href="#">Jenman African Safaris</a> is one operator that offers mokoro adventures in Botswana.</p> <p>Tourists can usually hire aqua trikes and pedal boats from local businesses or beach resorts, like <a href="#">OOK Social Beach Club</a> in Koh Samui, Thailand.</p>
<p>Towed water sports</p>	<p>Towed water sports are activities that involve being towed by a boat. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water skiing – being pulled behind a motorboat on twin skis or a mono-ski, in a forward-facing motion.</li> <li>• Wakeboarding – riders use a wide snowboard-style board and a sideways, surf-style stance. They are towed behind a motorboat across its 'wake' (waves created by the boat).</li> <li>• Parasailing – parasailers are towed behind a boat while attached to a parachute or canopy wing.</li> <li>• Tubing – participants are pulled along at high speeds on inflated tubes, often known as donuts, biscuits or banana boats.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Sharm Club</a> in Egypt offers a wide range of activities from Sharm el Sheik and Hurghada on the Red Sea, including water skiing and wakeboarding.</p> <p><a href="#">My Thailand Tours</a> offers a Coral Island full-day banana boat and parasailing tour in Phuket.</p>

<p>Motorised water sports</p>	<p>Motorised water sports are often seen as a casual holiday activity. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jet skiing – ‘jet ski’ is another term for personal watercraft, ridden like a motorbike across the water and propelled by a jet of water.</li> <li>• Hydroflighting – involves water jet propulsion lifting users out of the water. There are different types, including jetboards, jetpacks and jetbikes.</li> <li>• Motorised boat adventures – by RIB (rubber inflatable boats) or using another type of motorised boat.</li> </ul>	<p>Jet skiing is a very popular activity at beach resorts. <a href="#">Adrenaline Vibes</a> in Thailand offers jet ski safaris and weekend excursions.</p> <p>RIB adventures are quite common these days. They usually involve high-speed boat trips along coastlines, wildlife viewing, and swimming and snorkelling. <a href="#">Cape Xtreme</a> in South Africa is one example of a local operator.</p>
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Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

The water sports niche is much larger than can be described here. The infographic below suggests there are as many as 37 ‘epic water sports’. How many water sports do you offer?

Figure 2: 37 epic water sports you have to try once



Source: [Nomad Paradise](#)

## End-market segmentation

European travellers who take part in water sports while on holiday come from all consumer groups and age groups. The activity they decide to do depends on whether they are hard or soft adventure travellers. Traditional holidaymakers and fully independent travellers (FITs) are two other important categories in the water sports market that may overlap with hard and soft adventure tourists.

- Hard adventure tourists often travel to a destination for the specific purpose of practising their chosen water sport, such as windsurfing, kitesurfing or surfing. Hard adventure water sports tourists are similar to tourists who do extreme sports: they are predominantly male, aged between 25 and 44, high earners and well educated.
- Soft adventure tourists are a very large group of travellers who take part in water sports activities while on holiday, such as stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), waterskiing and body surfing. They may also try hard adventure water sports activities, with or without instruction.
- Traditional holidaymakers include people of various ages, genders and socio-economic backgrounds. They will take part in general water sports activities that are available to them, and that usually involve minimal skill. These include swimming, snorkelling, recreational boating activities and SUP. Families are a substantial

market in this group.

- FITs like to plan their own trips and make their own decisions about the activities they do. Water sports activities are likely to be included as part of a wider trip. This group is also more likely to try new things, like taking diving or sailing lessons, trying kitesurfing or whitewater kayaking. As a result, they are a mix of hard and soft adventurers. You can find out more about the FIT market in the CBI study [What are the opportunities in the European FIT tourism market?](#).

Table 3: End-market segmentation of the water sports tourism market

Traveller type	Swim/ snorkel	Kayak/ canoe	Board sports	Adre-naline	Recrea-tional boating	Towed water sports	Motor-ised water sports
Hard adventure	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Soft adventure	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Traditional holidaymakers	✓				✓		✓
FITs	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓

Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

## Accessible tourism in the European market

Accessible tourism is the ongoing endeavour to ensure that tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. It encompasses publicly and privately owned tourist locations. The improvements not only benefit those with permanent physical disabilities, but also parents with small children, elderly travellers, people with temporary injuries (such as broken bones), and their travel companions. Disabled tourists may travel individually, in groups, with their family or with caretakers.

### Accessibility and water sports tourism

Like all sports, water sports can provide many benefits to people with disabilities. People with physical disabilities usually find it easier to move around in water, whether indoors or outdoors. Hydrotherapies are often used as treatment options for people with disabilities. You should explore how to incorporate accessibility into your water sports business:

- Make a member of staff responsible for supporting the needs of your disabled guests. They should be proactive and completely honest about what you can and cannot provide.
- To make a swimming pool accessible for wheelchair users, you will need to install a slope or a pool lift. A slope is also suitable for non-wheelchair users if there are handrails.
- For both pool and beach entry, consider investing in an aquatic wheelchair. These are specially designed for water use.
- Learn more about [adaptive water sports](#). Most mainstream water sports have adaptive counterparts, like adaptive kayaking, adaptive SUP, sit water skiing, adaptive fishing and adaptive windsurfing. Depending on the nature of your business, see what you would need to do to offer products for disabled clients. See how this local operator, [Water Sports Mallorca](#), offers a range of adaptive water sports. Note how passionately the company talks about its desire to make water sports accessible to

all, regardless of disability.

### Tip:

Read the CBI study [What are the opportunities in the European market for accessible tourism?](#) for practical and useful advice on how to make your tours accessible.

## 2. What makes Europe an interesting market for water sports tourism?

Europe is an interesting market for water sports tourism as European nationals are very enthusiastic participants in many of the different water sports available to them. Water sports have been part of European culture for a long time, and today Europeans value sports in general as a way to unwind and get away from everyday life. The challenge of mastering skilled water sports like kitesurfing and windsurfing is very appealing to hard adventure travellers, who like to visit new places with the best conditions and climate for their chosen sport.

Water sports holidays are highly visible in the European tour operator marketplace. It is estimated that almost one in five European tour operators (19.8%) offer water sports in their itineraries. This clearly shows that Europeans like to do water sports when they go on holiday.

Worldwide, the water sports tourism market is experiencing growth. The [global water adventure tourism market was valued at US\\$156.9 billion in 2022](#). With a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.9%, it is expected to reach US\$845.8 billion by 2032. Demand for soft and hard water sports adventures while on holiday is growing, as more and more people seek to travel to off-the-beaten-track destinations to have exciting water-based experiences.

Water sports are considered to be adventure sports, and Europe is the largest source market for adventure tourism, accounting for 43% of the global market. Before the pandemic, Europeans made 10 million trips to foreign countries every year to engage in adventure sports, including water sports. Demand is also driven by a growing interest in thrilling water activities that involve some risk, like kitesurfing and windsurfing. Individuals, groups and families now travel to destinations that are well known as being the best places to practise specific water sports.

## 3. Which European countries offer the most opportunities for water sports tourism?

The European countries that offer the most opportunities for water sports in developing destinations are the UK, Germany, France, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. People from these countries have participated in water sports for a long time, and they like to travel to new places where the conditions and climate are better than back home. Understanding that travellers from these countries enjoy water sports in their daily lives means that you can target them to participate when they are on holiday. Many Europeans from these target markets will be keen to try new things while on a trip abroad.

### The UK

As an island nation, water sports are very popular in the UK. The country has a long tradition of water sports, and there is a strong culture of participation. As a result, Britons like to take to the water when they travel

overseas too.

The [Water Sports Participation Survey 2021](#) revealed that outdoor swimming was the most popular water sport in the UK (9.7 million participants in 2021, 17.9% of UK adults aged 18+), followed by canoeing/kayaking (5.7 million, 10.4%) and small boat leisure activities (3.6 million, 6.7%). Most participation in 2021 took place in the UK. Activities with higher participant rates abroad are those commonly enjoyed on holiday: outdoor swimming, using personal watercraft (like jet skis) and kitesurfing.

Table 4: Participation in water sports 1-2 times a year, and by destination (UK only, abroad only, UK and abroad)

Water sports activities	Volume ('000)	Participation rate %	Participation: % abroad only	% UK only	% UK and abroad
Outdoor swimming	9,711	17.9%	4%	77%	19%
Canoeing/kayaking	5,663	10.4%	2%	81%	17%
Small sailboat activities (dinghies)	3,627	6.7%	1%	74%	24%
SUP	3,388	6.2%	2%	79%	19%
Using personal watercraft (like jet skis)	3,312	6.1%	4%	66%	30%
Kitesurfing/kite foiling	3,101	5.7%	3%	62%	36%
Body boarding	2,204	4.1%	2%	75%	23%
Windsurfing/wind foiling	2,155	4.0%	1%	68%	31%
Stand-up surfing	1,838	3.4%	1%	67%	32%
Coasteering	1,636	3.0%	1%	72%	27%
Waterskiing/wakeboarding	1,567	2.9%	2%	64%	34%

Source: [Water Sports Participation Survey 2021](#)

These figures show that there was growth compared to 2020, a trend that is expected to continue. The survey also revealed that growth in the sector is being driven by casual participants, who take part in activities once or twice a year, rather than those who take part three or more times a year. It is also being driven by the increasing availability of water sports facilities in the country and an increased awareness of the health benefits of water sports.

Growth in the British market is good news for local tour operators seeking to attract British water sports enthusiasts, who are naturally attracted to water sports activities when they go on holiday abroad. Swimming has the highest participation rate abroad (4%), and it is also one of the most sustainable sports. To attract British swimmers, waters must be clean and safe. Because sustainability is a hot topic in the UK, as it is in much of Europe (see the section [Water sports growth makes a key contribution to sustainability in the tourism sector](#) below), you should put sustainability at the heart of your business.

Canoeing and kayaking also offer good opportunities for tour operators seeking to attract British water sports enthusiasts. Tours to remote islands, along rocky shorelines, city limits or coastal mangroves are very popular options in many destinations.

## Germany

Germans are Europe's most enthusiastic adventure tourists, and they enjoy water sports. A 2016 study showed that 12% of German respondents took part in water-based activities while on holiday. More than 6 million Germans take part in a variety of water sports, including sailing, motorboating, canoeing, water skiing, surfing and diving. Water sports became even more popular during the pandemic. SUP, sailing and motorised water sports all saw growth across the country.

In 2021, it was reported that 630,000 Germans aged 14 or older took part in water sports like sailing and surfing several times a month for leisure purposes. 1.1 million Germans took part in water sports once a month. In addition, Germans are spending more time doing water sports. Compared with 2019, the number of people taking part in water sports at least once a month grew by 31%, while the number of people taking part several times a month grew by 26%.

Table 5: Germans' participation in water sports, 2018-2021

Frequency (millions)	2018	2019	2020	2021	% growth 2019 vs 2021
Several times a week	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.2	233.3%
Several times a month	0.49	0.5	0.46	0.63	26.0%
Once a month	0.65	0.84	1.02	1.1	31.0%
Less than once a month	4.94	5.05	5.21	5.31	5.1%

Source: [Statista/VuMA 2022](#)

According to Statista, swimming is the most popular water sport for Germans (57%), followed by surfing (3%), canoeing/kayaking (2%), rafting and water skiing (1% each).

Germans are keen to take part in water sports when they travel. Water sports activities are provided to German consumers by tour operators like [meinReisebüro24](#), which offers kayaking, sailing and surfing trips.

## Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Sweden)

Typically, Scandinavians are true adventure tourists with specific characteristics. Nature and the outdoors are very important to them, and they are highly adaptable. They experience some of the harshest weather conditions in Europe, particularly in winter, so they like to visit warmer climates with a strong adventure travel offer. The Scandinavian market is a good target for winter tourism products between October and January, as Scandinavians seek to escape the cold, dark winters.

Water sports are an important part of Scandinavian culture. As enthusiastic adventure tourists, they like to practise water sports both at home and abroad. In Sweden, [around 20% of the population are active swimmers](#).

You should consider targeting the Scandinavian market if you offer adrenaline adventures. Scandinavians are used to practising their favourite water sports in a cold climate and are not afraid of trying new things. Rafting, surfing, kitesurfing and windsurfing are popular options amongst this group. Swedish tour operators offer water sports holidays to lots of developing destinations. For instance, [Gota Dagua](#) provides surfing holidays and courses in Sri Lanka.

## France

According to a survey, 20% of French people took part in a water sport in 2018, more than any team sport. France also has a strong surfing culture. The French market is an interesting one to target if your destination has good waves and a local surfing community, as there are almost 680,000 French surfers who surf either regularly or occasionally. [Surf Voyages Adekua](#) is a specialist French tour operator that organises trips to many developing destinations all over the world. It lists all the best places to surf for every month of the year, which shows how keen French people are on surfing.

## Netherlands

Water sports are popular amongst the Dutch, who also enjoy adventure tourism. In 2015, 55% of the Dutch population participated in water sports, showing a high preference for water sports. Since 2004, participation rates have remained reasonably stable, indicating that water sports remain popular outdoor activities.

Source: [Statista](#)

[Swimming and diving are the fourth most popular sport](#) for Dutch nationals who take part in sport occasionally (19%).

## 4. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats in the European water sports market?

The water sports market is growing steadily, driven by the increasing popularity of adventure tourism and the constant development of new technologies that help water sports evolve. The desire to maintain physical and mental fitness while on holiday is also stimulating demand for exciting water sports adventures. Sustainability is driving change in the segment as well, much like in other niches.

### Increased demand for exciting water sports adventures aligned with growth in adventure tourism

Most water sports are considered adventure activities. The increased demand for water sports, particularly those that involve some risk, is therefore contributing to the growth in adventure tourism. Rafting, surfing, kitesurfing and windsurfing are in high demand in destinations with ideal conditions. Hard adventure tourists demand challenging water sports that require high skill levels (windsurfing, kitesurfing, surfing, etc.) while soft adventure tourists look for new experiences in the great outdoors (kayaking, SUP, wild swimming). Motorised sports (jet skiing, waterskiing, parasailing, etc.) also provide unique and exciting adventures on or in the water. The [list of top trending motivations for adventure travel in 2023](#) published by the Adventure Travel Trade

Association (ATTA) includes several water sports activities. Several activities that cause 'an adrenaline rush' are listed in the top 10. Canoeing, kayaking, rafting and SUP are all adventure water sports activities that feature in the top 20.

Major sports brands that produce equipment for the water sports industry are helping to drive growth in water sports tourism. The reliability of technology and the quality of goods made by companies like Nike, Adidas and Under Armour boost customer confidence when it comes to taking part in their chosen water sport while on holiday. Water sports enthusiasts are further reassured by destinations and tourism businesses that guarantee highly trained staff, effective safety measures and properly maintained equipment. Adventure tour operators typically have robust safety and risk protocols in place (85%), and this is becoming more and more important every year.

[Kitesurf Las Terrenas](#) in the Dominican Republic is internationally certified with the International Kiteboarding Organisation (IKO), and its instructors have lots of pre- and post-qualification experience, meaning they are well qualified to teach successfully and safely.

### **Tips:**

Market your water sports product as an 'exciting adventure experience' to attract the European market. Be sure to emphasise the spectacular environment, whatever it might be – wind, waves, sun, beach, and so on. Adventure tourists are particularly motivated by spectacular outdoor environments, be it on land or water.

Always include detailed information about how you will keep your clients safe when they travel with you. This is an important requirement for adventure tourism. The more information you provide, the more reassured clients will be. Have a dedicated page on your website where you provide this information.

Read more about the adventure tourism market in the CBI study [What are the opportunities in the European market for adventure tourism?](#)

## **Staying active and healthy while on holiday remains a key consumer trend**

In line with the trend for keeping active at all ages, water sports are popular activities for people who want to stay fit. Maintaining physical and mental wellness continues to be a growing trend for people when they travel. Water sports activities are clearly aligned with the wellness sector.

The benefits of different water sports are well known:

1. Good exercise and improves physical health – participating in water sports is an excellent way to develop and maintain physical fitness. SUP is great for developing core strength, while swimming is one of the best sports for people of all ages and skill levels. It is a full-body workout with low impact on the joints. Swimming, paddling and canoeing/kayaking are also helpful to improve bone density, and can help increase strength and stamina. Sports like kitesurfing and windsurfing provide a bit of an extra challenge and demand more skill, which can be particularly satisfying.
2. Good for the whole family – particularly on holiday, water sports activities appeal to people of all ages. Pool sports, swimming and snorkelling, and recreational boating are good activities to do as a family or other group.
3. Improves mental health – most sports, including water sports, can have a positive effect on mood and reduce anxiety.
4. Offers freedom from the everyday – sailing, swimming, kayaking/canoeing and SUP all provide participants

with the opportunity to get out to unspoiled areas, relax and enjoy nature.

5. Some can be enjoyed all year round – depending on the weather conditions, some water sports can be enjoyed all year round. These include swimming, windsurfing and kitesurfing, diving and kayaking/canoeing. This means that local tour operators can target their products to water sports tourists out of season.
6. Great to try new activities – FITs and families like to try new things, particularly in destinations with lots of water sports on offer. This provides local operators with plenty of opportunities to target the water sports market.

## **New technologies and new sports driving growth in the water sports market**

Like many sports, water sports tend to evolve as equipment develops and standards change. New versions of sports become popular, old sports are revitalised and water sports enthusiasts are keen to try new things. Technology plays a big part in development and change, and technological advances in equipment are leading to an increased interest in water sports. For instance, windsurfing and kitesurfing, the original wind water sports, have spawned newer versions like [wind foiling](#), [wing foiling](#) and [kite foiling](#) thanks to new, highly technical equipment.

Hydroflight sports, which use water to propel users into the air, are undergoing technological developments. Meanwhile, [dronesurfing](#), a relatively new sport where surfers are towed by a drone, uses 'reimagined' existing technology.

Technological developments also help to strengthen safety procedures and improve equipment maintenance, reassuring participants. As the market continues to grow, more skilled professionals and instructors are becoming available to provide first-class lessons and experiences for water sport travellers at tourism businesses around the world.

### **Tip:**

Assess whether you can offer upgraded or new sports to your offer by using new technology. For instance, you could consider offering kitesurfing and wing foiling. If you are unable to make these kinds of upgrades, you should still make sure that the equipment you provide is well maintained. If you provide good-quality, up-to-date equipment, European water sport enthusiasts will be more likely to choose you. They will not be impressed by worn-out or poorly maintained equipment.

## **Water sports growth makes a key contribution to sustainability in the tourism sector**

Most of the specialist niches in the water sports segment contribute positively to sustainable tourism. Board sports, windsurfing, SUP, kayaking and canoeing all harness the power of the wind or people and are therefore carbon neutral.

Electric surfboards – also known as e-surfboards, jet boards or motorised surfboards – have been around for a few years and have gained considerable popularity. They have an electric motor that uses jet propulsion to move the board. E-surfboards help surfers glide more easily across the water no matter the conditions, and they are a great option for beginners who may not have the strength or skills to ride traditional surfboards. They do not produce any carbon emissions that disturb marine life or pollute the water.

Sustainability is widely regarded as essential for the future health of the planet and its people. In tourism, water sports businesses that are operated sustainably are well positioned to encourage sustainable initiatives and lead by example. See how local tour operator [Shockwave Victoria Falls](#) puts social responsibility at the heart of its offer and its homepage. The company aims to bring together customers and local communities to bring

about positive change.

### **Tips:**

Learn about your local environment and the ways you can help protect it. For instance, if you offer kayaking trips to local mangroves, educate your customers to help them understand why they are important. Make sure they know not to touch or remove any biological matter.

Encourage surfers to use [reef-friendly sunscreen](#) if your kitesurfing or windsurfing business is close to an offshore reef. You can also sell it to them directly. Most adventure tourists care about the planet and sustainability and will be keen to do their bit.

Develop a water sport business that does not require any motorisation. If you have a motorised water sport business, investigate how you can make it more sustainable by using cleaner fuels and taking steps to reduce noise pollution.

Encourage your customers to behave responsibly. Ask them to use biodegradable products, such as organic mosquito spray, bring refillable water bottles, and dispose of their rubbish properly. You could also start a beach clean-up initiative for your customers.

Ban single-use plastics throughout your business. Lobby your local tourist board for a region-wide ban.

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

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