

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH OTA's

Now you've decided to work with an Online Travel Agent...

1

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

An OTA will take up to 30% in commission (do negotiate this!). Carefully calculate ALL of your costs and be sure of your absolute **minimum acceptable net revenue**.

2

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

Be selective, work with 2 - 3 OTA's that reflect your customer base (eg VELTRA serves 85% of its website visits from customers in Asia).

3

CAST YOUR NET

Never rely on only one source for bookings. Consider channels like tour operators, email marketing, hotel concierges and, **crucially**, your own channels such as Facebook and **your website**.

4

BE STRATEGIC

Only offer off-peak or last-minute availability on an OTA. Take a 'suck it and see' approach - some offers on an OTA might work really well while others may not.

5

CONSIDER CANCELLATION POLICIES

Some OTA's require a 24-hour cancellation or a full refund policy so negotiate with the OTA if this is going to cause you problems.

6

RESEARCH

Do research on your direct competitors' OTA listings as well as comparable activities in other regions and countries.

7

PREPARE

Before listing your tour or activity, figure out the activity's logistics, compose your spiel and select the best imagery to demonstrate your product. But beware! Some OTA's will alter your text to suit their own style; The product and customer, in effect, become 'theirs'. Some OTA's require proof of insurance in the sign-up process so have digital copies ready.

8

PRICING

Although OTA's insist on rate/price parity you *can* lower your rates to a limited audience (check the OTA's T's & C's). So, while you can't publicly advertise lower rates, you are allowed to do so to a limited audience but **not** on your website. Eg you can drive direct bookings at different rates via Facebook, Twitter, your contact database & direct phone enquiries.

9

MITIGATING PRICE PARITY

Make your own website attractive, modern & easy to find and ensure your own booking system is as simple as possible. Use enticing offers and prominent 'Book Now' buttons. You only get one chance to make a first impression!

10

MANAGING BOOKINGS

Consider how you are going to manage bookings coming from different sources (phone, OTA, Facebook etc)- how will you track this? There are many booking management systems so find one that fits your business.