

# INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEYS EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP



**Interreg** 

France ( Channel  
Manche ) England

**EXPERIENCE**

European Regional Development Fund



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**VISIT KENT**

**BUSINESS**

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## Experience Travel Trends that resonate with the Inspirational Journeys offer

**Transformative travel** - We are now looking for travel experiences where we can learn and grow as individuals, we are still looking to create memorable moments, but we want these activities to leave us 'positively' changed. One of the oldest examples of transformative travel is pilgrimage. In its purest form it is a spiritual journey, but in today's society, pilgrimage has taken on a broader more encompassing meaning around the concept of self-discovery and reflection, with or without the final spiritual goal.

**The 'Greta Thunberg' effect** – Travellers are becoming increasingly aware of their impact on the planet; although this hasn't dampened the desire to travel, it has raised questions as to 'how' we travel.

**Improving wellbeing** – By definition, wellbeing is – being comfortable, healthy and happy

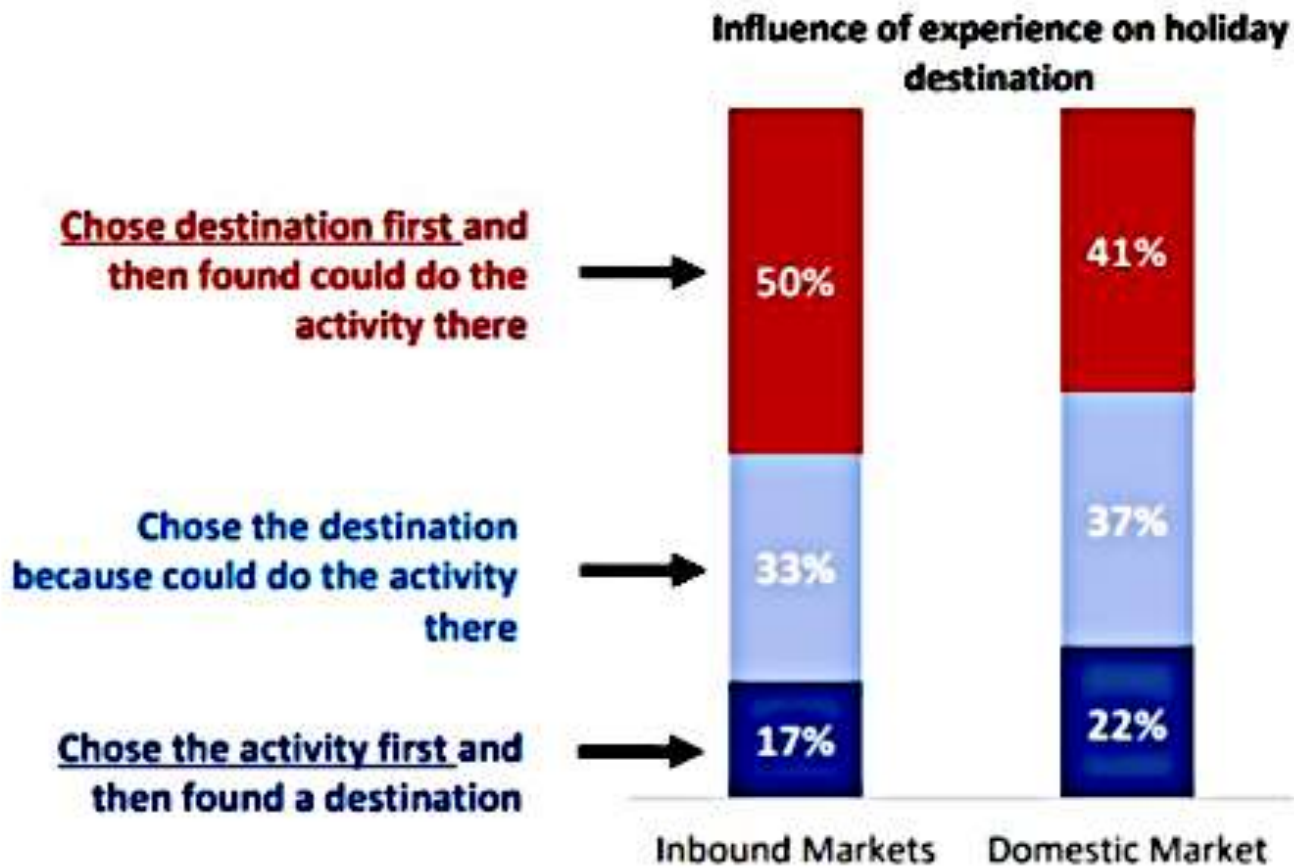
**Reconnect** – We want to reconnect with our families and friends through shared experiences. We want to reconnect with the natural environment

**Local and authentic** – This has probably been the longest standing driver for experience-led travel. People like to meet people and explore new places, so there is nothing better than to be guided by a local.

**Under tourism** - Getting away from the crowds was a desire before Covid-19, now this desire has just been accentuated



# The Benefits of experience tourism for Kent

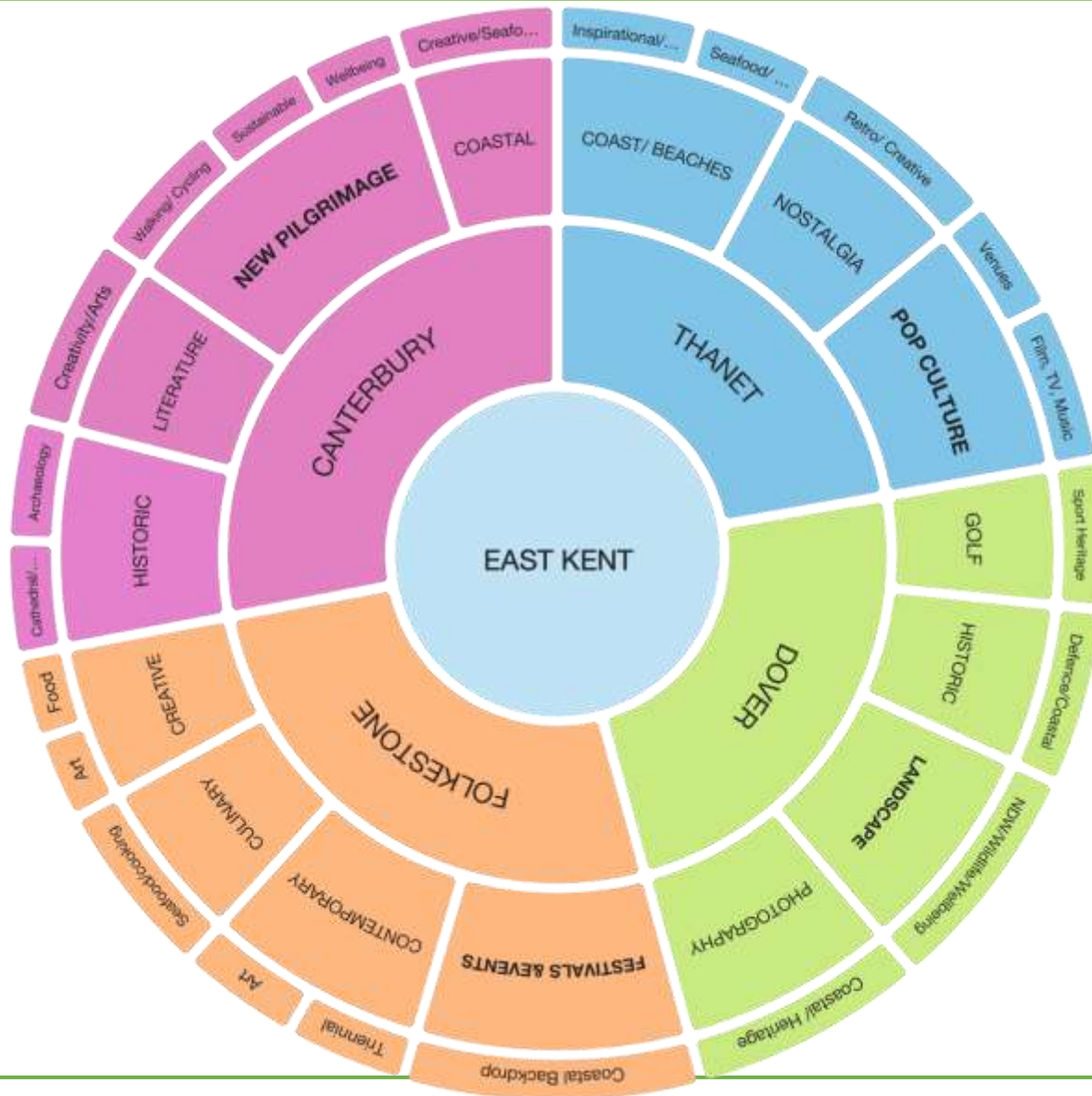


Developing travel experiences, is an effective way for a destination to reach and influence customers. From recent VisitBritain research, we already know that:

- ✓ **BOOK IN ADVANCE** - When booking an experience, 65% of the domestic market book before leaving home.
- ✓ **WILL TRAVEL OUT OF SEASON** – Many experiences are even better out of the main visitor season and can help drive footfall over these periods.
- ✓ **EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE DESTINATION CHOICE** - Nearly 60% of the domestic market are influenced by an experience when selecting a destination



# Options Analysis for East Kent – Core Strengths



Inspirational Journeys product gaps and opportunities:

- ✓ New Pilgrimage
- ✓ Walking and cycling experiences
- ✓ Nature safaris
- ✓ Wellbeing
- ✓ Closer to the coast – photograph it; paddle in it or view it from the cliff top
- ✓ Water sports
- ✓ Art walking tours
- ✓ Combination walking tours – food, history
- ✓ Sustainability







# Options Analysis for North Kent – Core Strengths



Inspirational Journeys product gaps and opportunities:

- ✓ Riverside
- ✓ Boat trips – fortifications and maritime
- ✓ Walking - Villages & Views of the Downs
- ✓ Food trails
- ✓ Walking tours – culture and heritage
- ✓ Green spaces - country parks/ riverside
- ✓ Outdoor fitness
- ✓ Nature



# Building on the current product for Canterbury, Whitstable & Herne Bay

**Walking and cycling** – Both guided and self guided offer capitalising on the stunning countryside

The success of themed **walking tours** to extend to pilgrimage routes – focusing on the paths less taken.

Food with a back story – the authenticity and sourcing credentials of **food and drink** can set a restaurant and hotel apart

**Sustainable transport** as a bridge to new experiences - A rail journey to a vineyard or a stunning walk with a view

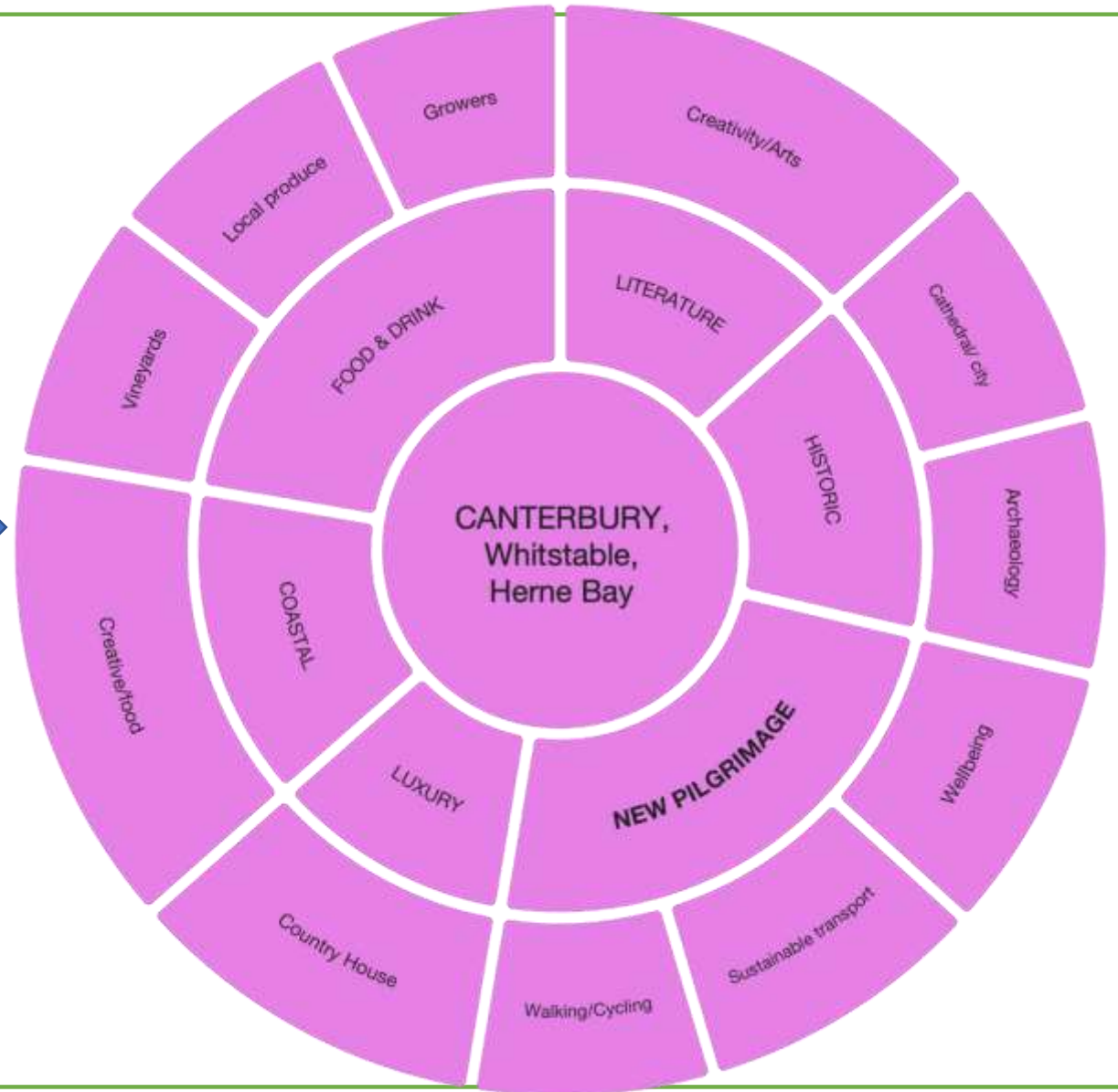
History **behind closed doors** and under your feet – behind the scenes tours of historical sites and collections as well as hands on opportunities such as dig sites.

**Transformative and wellbeing** focus: the **new pilgrimage** to find yourself and to reconnect using the resource of the NDW

**Luxury** – capitalising on the growth luxury accommodation and the wedding/ business extender market

**Creative inspiration** – creative arts courses and behind the scenes that are inspired by the heritage, coast, landscape & community

Strengthened and enhanced via a sustainable commitment







# Product priorities – gaps & considerations

	Primary Themes	Gaps analysis for selected theme
Canterbury	Sustainable tourism	<p>2019 saw wellness, sustainability and responsible tourism all emerge as growth trends to counter-balance over-tourism.</p> <p>The visitor wants to be greener, <b>be more selective in the way they travel and know the back story on everything</b>, especially where their food has come from. Driven by the millennials segment, there isn't so much a fear of missing out (FOMO) but a joy of missing out (JOMO), if that means their final travel impact is reduced.</p> <p>Although eco/ green/ sustainable tourism appeals to the visitor, the key is to integrate it across the entire destination. If this is to become a key strength for Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable commitment from both the public and private sector needs to be woven into the destination pitch.</p> <p>This will help <b>reposition the destination to a new younger audience base</b>, and if actioned effectively, could be used to win over a new consumer base to visit out of season, to explore the wider area.</p> <p>The millennial audience is savvy, and will see beyond stickers and seals of approval. Delivering against the sustainability filter will require both establishing business leaders and passionate start-ups to take a 'Sustainable' ambassador role for the area. This will create a ripple effect encouraging more businesses to commit to a sustainable step change.</p> <p>For consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising all available methods of transport; <b>increased use of public transport, train travel and bike hire facilities.</b></li> <li>• Capitalising on how <b>Pilgrimage could be repositioned to a wider audience under a transformative banner</b> are all opportunities.</li> <li>• Taking a sustainable approach as a lead theme would need to be consumer tested, in order to dial up or dial down the positioning of the message when communicating to set segments.</li> </ul> <p><i>E.g.</i> The Gen Z audience position 'sustainability' high on their destination selection criteria, where as the older repeat visitor market, may view the sustainable credentials as a final decision making criteria.</p> <p>Please note: A dedicated factsheet for Pilgrimage will be supplied by the Kent Down AONB</p>



## Pilgrimage & Sustainability





# Outdoor Activity insights that resonate with the NDW/ KDAONB offer

## Outdoor activity insights taken from the Discover England research report:

The research shows that more people over the age of 45 engage with the walking and cycling product (esp. walking).

Activities such as surfing, horse riding and kayaking, are chosen by the under 35's who generally book these activities in advance.

**Take out:** At present walking is not seen as a bookable product and for the majority, it is very much 'part of' rather than 'main reason' for the travel decision. The 45-65 age range are the most engaged with gentle walking to full day hikes, from the data in fig 1.3 it is notable that they are less swayed by outdoor activity in choosing the destination, therefore it is important to understand the value of additional trigger points for their destination selection. E.g. Food & drink, Heritage

Fig 1.3

EXTENT TO WHICH MAIN ACTIVITY WAS REASON FOR GOING ON HOLIDAY – ALL P3Y TRIPS INVOLVING ANY ACTIVITY

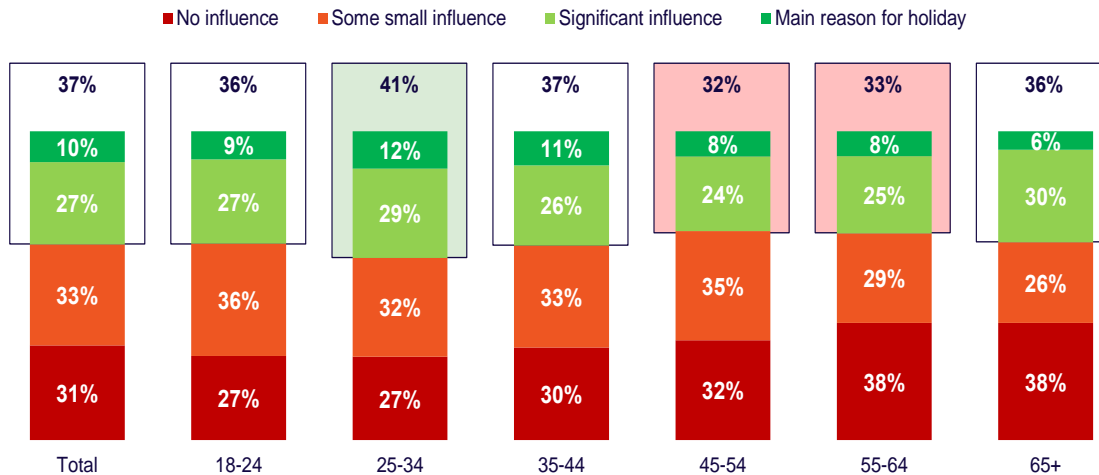
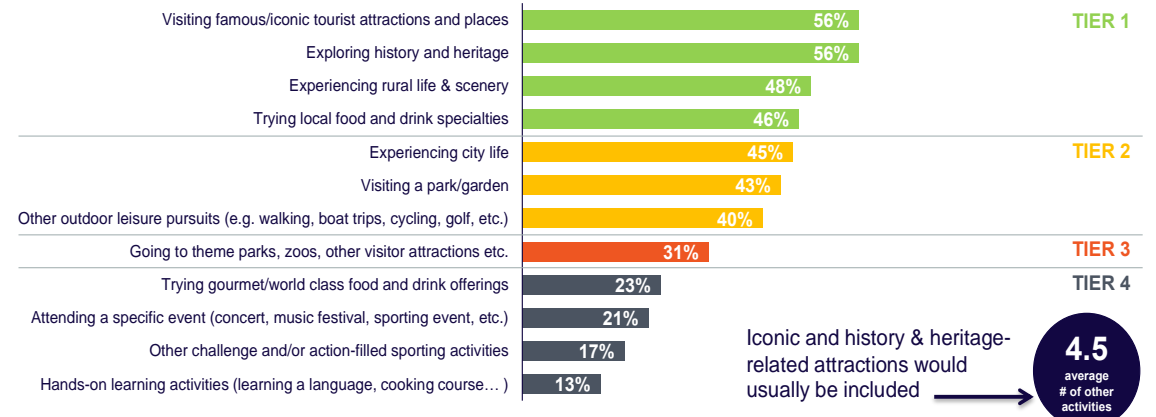


Fig 1.4

OTHER ACTIVITIES PURSUED ON HOLIDAY TO ENGLAND INVOLVING OUTDOOR ACTIVITY



## Other activities that include outdoor activity:

The data in fig 1.4 focuses on the key products that are:

- Associated with outdoor activity
- Are the favoured products from an already receptive audience for outdoor activity

## Take out:

All products highlighted in Tier 1 can be easily matched along the NDW and used to bolster the trails appeal to a casual walking audience. Given the age engagement with walking and cycling skewed towards the 35-65 yr range, it is also worth noting that walking and cycling engagement may include multiple family members/ abilities.



# How does the walking offer need to change to appeal to a wider audience

**Outdoor activity** – Both international and domestic tourism research highlights the appeal of the countryside in attracting visitors. Areas of the UK such as Cornwall, Wales and Scotland position themselves for both tier 1 activities (fig 1.4 p9) such as walking and cycling as well tier 2/3 such as surfing and rock climbing, this broadens the destination appeal to a wider /younger audience. Although the Kent countryside and coast may not be able to match this variety, what it can offer, is accessibility and additional product overlay. E.g. food & Drink

For example: **How weaving in additional product can help?**

## 1.Walking

The NDW section from Charing to Wye encompasses stunning views, woodland, agricultural and downland landscape as well as linking end to end to the rail network  
This is a stunning 2.5 hour walk ... but it only hooks the visitors' attention if they are considering going for a walk.

## 2.Walking plus

When focusing on the experience rather than the distance of the route, the information takes on a new life i.e. Charing to Wye becomes a section where you can walk in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims ,sample the local wine (Westwell Vineyard) and discover the tomb of Richard Plantagenet (Eastwell Church Ruin) all on a 2.5 hour walk along the NDW National Trail.  
Whether this approach is to encourage self-guided or guide-led activity, overlying additional product that is known to be of interest to a potential outdoor activity audience, will create a point of difference with other Parks and AONBs.  
For time conscious short breakers, allocating 3 or more days just to walking 'the route' might not be a luxury they have; equally, they may be a family group who needs to cater for different ages.

The opportunity offered around a walking/ cycling 'plus' proposition is to show how a ½ day walking experience is a must-do part of their staycation.

## What makes a good walk?

- a.) Landscape/ views/ architectural vistas
- b.) points of interest along the way
- c.) A chance to relax, unwind and recharge

## What makes a good walking experience?

- a.) Landscape/ views/ architectural vistas - with a back story
- b.) bringing the heritage alive through storytelling, stopping off at local producers/ vineyards – lunch at a pub, cake at a tearoom.
- c.) A chance to relax, unwind and recharge – meeting local people



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**Chris Brant**  
**Unmissable England**

# NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES



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# EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Develop an all-year round product offer that will not only help your business to grow but also help your business become more resilient to future challenges.





# THE PROJECT PERKS

- 1 1:1 Specialist Consultation**  
Specialist consultancy to support the development of a business plan for the launch of your new product
- 2 Product Testing**  
Market testing of your concept with consumers and travel trade, and feed back to further develop your product
- 3 Content Development**  
New photography for your product and inclusion in inspirational content
- 4 Consumer marketing**  
Inclusion in targeted off-season consumer campaigns to market your product
- 5 B2B distribution**  
Distribution of your product to the travel trade through our established B2B connections and networks

The total estimated value of what you receive is £6,000



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# APPLICATIONS

125 places available on the programme

70 + applications received in the first round

Deadline to apply 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Collaborative / joint applications encouraged



**Farmers. Producers. Artists. Sailors. Surfers. Chefs. Yoga Instructors.  
Vineyards. Distillers. Pubs. Creators. Photographers. Attractions. Hotels.  
Foragers. Astronomers. Upcyclers. Historians. Bird Watchers. Actors**