



SCOTLAND'S EXPERIENCES **START HERE**

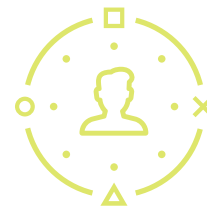
A guide to developing memorable
and authentic visitor experiences

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→ JEDBURGH

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCES



Experiential Tourism allows the visitor to immerse in a sense of place and connect with locals, heritage, culture, the uniqueness of a place, and leave with an emotional connection worth talking about.

An 'experience' actively involves visitors so they can feel special and have the opportunity to engage with local culture and connect with a place, its people and stories.

When people travel, they no longer want to just 'see' a place; they want to live it, breath it, touch it, become part of it.

Authentic visitor experiences are an opportunity for tourism businesses to go beyond delivering conventional tourism products based on goods and services. This means rethinking the traditional approach and offering visitors immersive experiences to connect with places and gain a deeper understanding of where they are and giving visitors a distinctive and compelling reason to visit.

HOW CAN THIS TOOLKIT HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

This toolkit is a resource created to give you ideas about how to develop, deliver and promote new and memorable visitor experiences. This toolkit will enable you to create business opportunities following the market trend for experiential travel.

It provides you with information on:

- How you can adopt the Scotland's Experiences Start Here style for your marketing activities.
- How to move from selling tourism products to providing engaging and memorable experiences.
- Tips on promoting your experiences.

→ CRAWICK MULTIVERSE



Credit: VisitScotland / Kenny Lam

SCOTLAND STARTS HERE

EXPERIENCE COLLECTION

Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection will offer visitors outstanding and unique experiences incorporating and building on the best known, most iconic aspects of the region. We will use the most distinctive features of our Food & Drink, Nature & Outdoors, Coastal, Cultural Heritage, to create exceptional visitor experiences.

Our themes are unique and authentic, combining our natural landscape assets, tourism products, customer service, stories (and the telling of them) to create compelling experiences. They resonate and appeal to our visitors and should give us a competitive edge. They will be available for consumers and the Travel Trade to book.

TALES FROM THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

Tales from the South of Scotland are experiences celebrating and revolving around our living history, stunning landscapes and a host of interesting characters, living, dead and imaginary. Visitors can 'uncover our stories' through the design and delivery of these experiences.

These tourism assets reference the spirit, identity, and sense of place of the communities, poets and writers living in the South of Scotland. They recognise the region's literary and cultural icons and give us an exciting opportunity to showcase the region and to stand out in national and international marketplaces.

The exemplar case studies in this guide emphasise the variety of the experiences on offer. This collection should act as a catalyst to support you as you develop your own authentic and memorable visitor experiences.

OUR AMBITION

Our ambition is to:

- Build a collection of outstanding experiences and weave in the stories that surprise and delight the visitor along the way.
- Create a range and variety of visitor experiences that capture the attention and imagination of consumers to entice them to visit the South of Scotland now.
- Offer outstanding visitor experiences that engage people with loved landscapes and stories.
- Build the reputation of The Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection in international markets.

The Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection creates a compelling offer to attract visitors to the South of Scotland.

WHAT SHOULD A SCOTLAND STARTS HERE EXPERIENCE LOOK LIKE?



South of Scotland experiences must tap into the hearts and minds of visitors, inviting them to connect with local people, culture and geography through personal exploration. Developing successful experiences, the South of Scotland must play to its strengths and convey a real "sense of place" to our visitors.

ALIGNING EXPERIENCES WITH THE **SCOTLAND STARTS HERE BRAND**

The Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection gives visitors the first taste of our rich culture, history and heritage, their first chance to experience our living landscapes, rural life, to meet the people of the South; their first experiences, touchpoints, memories of Scotland are forged here.

At the heart of the Experience Collection is the need to capture the vibrancy, diversity and authenticity of what the South of Scotland has to offer. By showcasing our experiences and this incredible part of the country, the visitor experience is shaped by their interaction with local people, the activities they enjoy and words and images that form their stay – their memories will start here.

The Experience Collection characteristics.

IMMERSIVE

Characterful, memorable experiences, rooted in the culture and history of the South of Scotland.

ACCESSIBLE

An easy way to experience the best of Scotland's living landscapes, history and rural life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

A connection to the communities through immersive doing, not just visiting, leaving our visitors feeling inspired.

CONNECTED

With local people, places, the past and present.

ENRICHING

Living people, local stories, traditions and customs



→ **ELLISLAND FARM MUSEUM**

THE EXPERIENCE COLLECTION CRITERIA

Criteria for the Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection are essential characteristics and provides an overview and rationale for developing experiences as part of the collection.

The experiences must:

- Be extraordinary, allowing the visitor to immerse themselves in the life of the South of Scotland.
- Involve meeting people with a strong connection to local communities and include stories of local people, past and present.
- Incorporate and build on the best known and most iconic aspects of the South of Scotland – telling the story of our unique landscapes, cultural and literary heritage, and the people that were inspired to write and live here.
- Encourage visitors to participate in the activity.
- Be full of character and help visitors connect with the writers who were living in this landscape.
- Be aligned to the Scotland Starts Here brand.
- Encourage and engage businesses and local partners.
- Help visitors to find and enjoy unique experiences, that are aligned to their interests and passions.
- Be welcoming to everyone.
- Be Authentic, Sustainable and Available.



→ ABBOTSFORD HOUSE



→ DRYBURGH ABBEY BRIDGE

Credit: Jason Baxter



→ GUNSGREEN

A LANDSCAPE THAT HAS INSPIRED STORIES

THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND STORY STARTS HERE

**The Scottish Borders and Dumfries
and Galloway have been inspiring
storytellers for hundreds of years.**



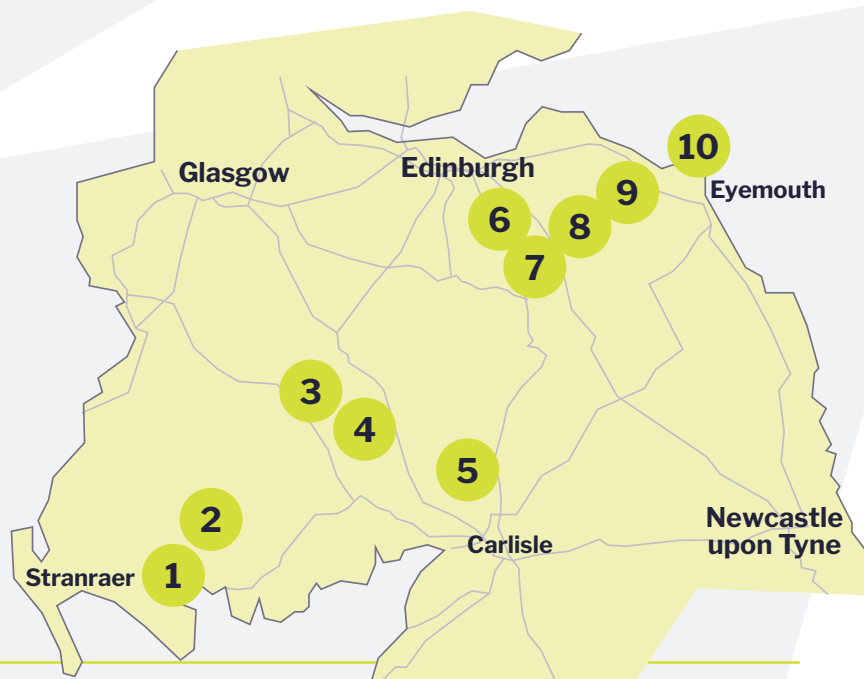
→ EILDON HILLS

TALES FROM THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

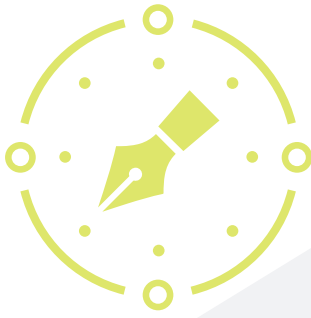
These ten unique tales are authentic, memorable experiences that have been created to showcase the South of Scotland. All are guided by story tellers relating the narratives that are woven through the architecture and the landscapes of the region.

The ten tales are the first Experiences in our collection and will build the reputation of The Scotland Starts Here Experience Collection in international markets. This is a carefully curated selection of the very best of the South of Scotland – these experiences its very essence.

With their enthusiasm, knowledge and passion, the storytellers will allow visitors to discover the unique people and places that make the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway so special.



- 1. Whithorn. THE BUILDER'S TALE:**
Modern day apprentices recreate the stories of builders past at the Whithorn Trust.
- 2. Wigtown. TALE OF A BOOK TOWN:**
Guided walk through the bookshops of Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town.
- 3. Dumfries. THE POET'S TALE:**
Hear the stories of the farm and house at Ellisland, home to Robert Burns, with a unique refreshment.
- 4. Dumfries. TALES OF NEVERLAND:**
Guided tour of Moat Brae - its garden inspired J.M.Barrie's Neverland in his tales of Peter Pan.
- 5. Eastriggs. THE CURATOR'S TALE:**
Spend a morning with the Devil's Porridge Museum curator learning how to take care of treasured, historical objects.
- 6. Galashiels. THE STITCHER'S TALE:**
Learn the stories behind the people who stitched the Great Tapestry of Scotland.
- 7. Melrose. THE WRITER'S WALK:** Follow the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott as you walk through the Borders landscape that influenced his works.
- 8. Melrose. THE ROMAN'S TALE:** Guided walking tour of the site of Britain's most northerly Roman fort, Trimontium.
- 9. Melrose. THE WRITER'S TALE:**
Taste whisky in a hidden room while you tour the house that Sir Walter Scott created at Abbotsford.
- 10. Eyemouth. THE SMUGGLER'S TALE:**
Take afternoon tea at Gunsgreen House, the home of notorious smuggler John Nisbet.



John Buchan, Hugh MacDiarmid, J.M. Barrie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Dorothy Dunnet and William Boyd have used the landscapes to inspire their imaginations.

Stories have been important since the 14th to the 17th centuries when The Border Ballads were spoken and passed on from one generation to another, conveying the thoughts, feelings and deeds of the people who lived through that troubled time.

During the 18th and 19th centuries this became **Scotland's literary heartland**, when world renowned names such as Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns and James Hogg lived here, and Wordsworth and Robert Louis Stevenson visited.

More recently authors, poets, and storytellers including John Buchan, Hugh MacDiarmid, J.M. Barrie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Dorothy Dunnet and William Boyd have used the landscapes to inspire their imaginations and offer the backdrop to their tales.

Throughout its history the South of Scotland has unique cultural traditions that are expressed in world renowned literature, storytelling, traditional music, songs and folklore. The region's identity is preserved and expressed in the towns and villages and their distinctive local celebrations – for example the Common Ridings annual tradition of marking a town's boundary on horseback persists in many locations.

The history and heritage is represented in a host of iconic buildings – castles, country houses and museums – as well as the area's collections and archives, while community initiated cultural activity - events, festivals, exhibitions and projects - all contribute to a sense of identity and belonging.

The landscape has played a strong role and has helped define the people who have lived here. At Siccar Point, the formation of two different types of rocks helped James Hutton in 1788 realise the earth was much older than previously thought and launched the modern science of geology.

The people have left their traces within that landscape. Remains of the Romans' most northerly settlement in the British Isles have been uncovered near modern-day Melrose. Whithorn can record traces of built settlements back to the site of the earliest Christian Community in Scotland. And in 2014, the richest collection of rare and unique Viking-age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland was unearthed in Galloway. Known as the Galloway Hoard, these remarkable objects were buried around 900A.D.

The Tales from the South of Scotland have been designed to attract national and international visitors. They tell the story of the rich contribution which history, heritage, culture and literature makes to the region as a whole. The experiences are designed to inspire guests to return home, to retell these tales and encourage others to come, wanting to hear more and to hear how the South of Scotland's story experience impacts on Scotland as a whole.



CASE STUDY

THE BUILDER'S TALE

Modern day apprentices recreate the stories of builders past at the Whithorn Trust

The Whithorn Trust site is a nationally important archaeological site and has evidence for 1600 years of settlement and activity, including the very first Christians ever known in Scotland. To give visitors a sense of what life would be like throughout this long period of history, the Trust devised a Touching History experience, focusing on the tools and techniques the early builders would have used to create these early structures.

This Experience includes:

- Introduction to early technologies and buildings making use of the Trust's Iron Age Roundhouse replica.
- A choice of hands-on activities to pursue.
- Interaction of the clients with the Trust's apprentices, who are learning and preserving these old skills.
- Involving guests in helping build and maintain the structures on site.

In addition the Trust can provide expert demonstrations of some techniques if guests would rather not participate. There are add-ons for groups who hold a particular interest in this field including specially guided tours of the Whithorn Priory and Iron Age Roundhouse and object handling of artefacts located within the museum.



→ LEADERFOOT VIADUCT



→ MOAT BRAE

WHAT ARE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES?

Many tourism businesses have traditionally marketed themselves as a series of products e.g. hotel rooms, picturesque views, a location for general activities such as museums, sports, dining out etc. They focused on the physical attributes of the landscape or the standalone infrastructure assets on offer.

Authentic visitor experiences are an opportunity for tourism businesses to go beyond delivering traditional tourism products based on goods (e.g. rooms or food) and services. Visitors are looking for more than just a packaged sightseeing tour, or an attraction or location.

Authentic experiences should be unique and individual for each visitor, matching their interests, providing a sense of personal achievement, and creating their own lasting memories.

It means taking the goods and services that have traditionally been part of the tourism industry up a level by designing opportunities for our visitors to:

LEARN

- a new skill, about who we are and how we live, or to challenge themselves
- Learn something by doing something with someone who lives here.

DO

- be a hands-on participant in the activity, not a passive observer.

BE LOCAL

- by meeting and engaging with people who are interested in sharing our local culture, practices and way of life or a particular skill they may have.



CASE STUDY TALE OF A BOOK TOWN

Guided walk through the bookshops of Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town.

The Wigtown Festival Company is a literary charity that runs the multiple award-winning Wigtown Book Festival, one of the UK's best-loved literary gatherings, which takes place over 10 days each autumn and offers more than 300 events for all ages.

In order to introduce an ever-growing audience to the joys of this literary landmark, the tour is designed to give visitors an insider's view of stories that abound in such a place.

This Experience includes:

- Insight into how a historic market town in the Galloway countryside revitalised itself and found worldwide recognition as Scotland's National Book Town.
- Behind the scenes look at unique bookstore that visitors can pay to run themselves.
- Stories of literary ghosts, scandalous scribes, exploding Kindles and romance among the shelves.
- Guided tour enhanced with music, video and the odd surprise.

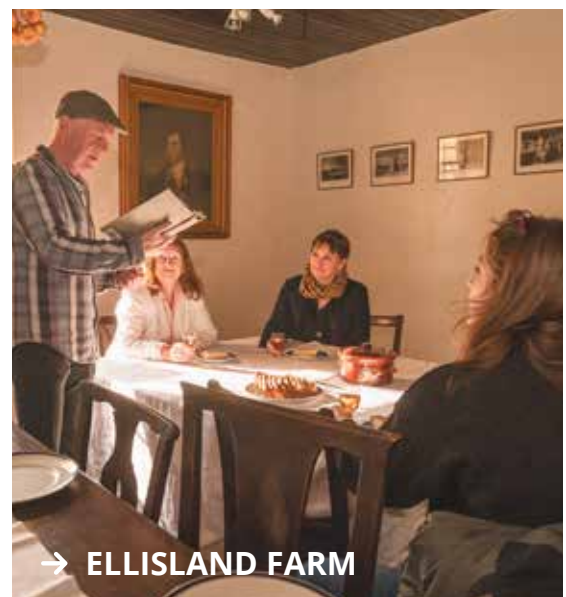
CASE STUDY THE POET'S TALE

Hear the stories of the farm and house at Ellisland, home to Robert Burns, with a unique refreshment.

Standing six miles outside of Dumfries, Ellisland Farm has changed little since 1788. The whitewashed steading is today considered to be the most authentic of all Burns's homes. In order to give an authentic twist to the usual visitor experience, visitors are treated to Scottish Bannocks and a local whisky to toast and celebrate the Bard himself.

This Experience includes:

- Walk in Burns's footsteps along the River Nith where he penned his supernatural masterpiece Tam O' Shanter.
- See his study where he wrote and the manuscript of The Wounded Hare, written after he saw the animal shot in the fields near his house.
- Visit the kitchen to see where his wife Jean baked "bannocks" - a unique type of bread, praised by Burns in his verse.
- Sample artisan made Bannocks and toast the great Bard with a dram of Man 'o Words (named for Burns himself) malt whisky from the county's Annandale Distillery.





→ MOAT BRAE

CASE STUDY TALES OF NEVERLAND

Guided tour of Moat Brae - its garden inspired J.M.Barrie's Neverland in his tales of Peter Pan.

Moat Brae house was visited by a young J.M. Barrie and its beautiful riverside garden inspired him when he wrote his stories of Peter Pan and Neverland. Today Moat Brae has been restored to its 19th century glory and its garden developed as a wonderful playground for children. Encouraging young people to visit is particularly befitting as Moat Brae's other remit is Scotland's National Centre for Children's Books.

This Experience includes:

- Learn how J.M. Barrie visited Moat Brae and experience the house as it would have been in his day.
- See the bell that played Tinkerbelle in the original 1904 play of Peter Pan in London.
- Explore the exhibition areas and all levels of the house.
- Enter the Neverland Discover Garden, which has become an ideal playground for children of all ages with a giant pirate ship, mermaid's lagoon, Wendy House and fairy bower.



→ BORDERS BOOK FESTIVAL

CASE STUDY LITERARY TALES

Follow the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott as you walk through the Borders landscape that influenced his works.

The Borders Book Festival is one of the UK's top literature festivals run by those from and living in the Scottish Borders community. It is able to call upon authors as guides to offer unique insight into the landscape through which Sir Walter Scott walked and lived and this brings this experience a truly unique selling point.

This Experience includes:

- Stride through the landscape of Sir Walter Scott and understand how it impacted his work.
- Hear stories of ghosts and warlocks, standing stones, the life of St Cuthbert and of the great abbey at Dryburgh.
- Local authors tell these tales delivering a powerful insight unique to this tour.

An aerial photograph of the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, a large stone structure with multiple gables and arches, surrounded by green lawns and trees. A yellow arrow points to the text '→ DRYBURGH ABBEY' in the top left corner.

→ DRYBURGH ABBEY

CREATING AUTHENTIC TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Visitors are looking for more when visiting destinations. It is not just about where they have been but what they felt, thought and remembered from being there.

Authentic experiences distinguish a destination from its competitors and the perceived opportunity for such experiences can attract visitors to a destination.

Creating experiences is all about combining natural landscape assets, tourism products, customer service, stories (and the telling of them) to create compelling consumer offerings or 'experiences'.

These experiences are generated by the people met, places visited, activities participated in and memories created from travel, particularly through watching, tasting, smelling, touching, listening to and being part of a culture or lifestyle that is distinctly different from everyday life.

Creating authentic experiences is about being consumer-focused, understanding their needs and motivations, and then offering unique and authentic experiences that motivate and fulfil these needs.

Visitor experiences must inspire and delight by:

- Leaving a lasting memory.
- Differentiating your product from its competition.
- Displaying innovation.
- Standing out as unique and/or special.

When deciding where to go, visitors look at the whole picture – accommodation, eating out, shopping, and things to do. Collaboration with other like-minded tourism businesses in established or innovative ways creates opportunities to devise your own authentic visitor experiences. This means making sure your combined experiences can be booked in one place easily, that will attract new visitors and repeat customers.

This means you need to have a clear understanding of guests' likes and interests so you can tailor experiences that more effectively meet the needs of your target audiences.

FROM PRODUCTS TO EXPERIENCES

Visitors are increasingly looking for a greater level of active participation when they travel.

Authentic experiences are about combining our natural landscape, tourism products, customer service, stories (and the telling of them) to create compelling consumer 'experiences'.

Making the shift towards thinking about selling experiences rather than just a commodity might sound complex, but it's not. This requires tourism businesses to have a greater understanding of their guest's likes and interests so they can tailor experiences that more effectively meet the needs of their target audiences.

Experiences provide an opportunity for visitors to become active participants, by trying a new skill or craft, learning who we are or how we live, or challenging themselves. It's about meeting the locals, business owners and staff, artisans, guides, musicians, storytellers, and people in our communities who have a special skill to share or an interesting story to tell.

Evidence suggests that visitors are prepared to pay a premium for experiences that focus on what is truly unique or memorable about a destination.

Here is an example of moving from a product to an experience.

WHISKY TASTING EXPERIENCE

This diagram illustrates the process of moving from offering individual commodities, products and services to delivering compelling and engaging experiences. Every level of value you add enhances your visitors' experiences and sets you apart from your competitors. The more value you add, the greater the opportunity to increase your revenue.



EXPERIENCE image credit: Scotch Whisky Experience



→ DEVILS PORRIDGE MUSEUM

CASE STUDY THE CURATOR'S TALE

Spend a morning with the Devil's Porridge Museum curator learning how to take care of treasured, historical objects.

The Devil's Porridge Museum is a 5-star Visit Scotland attraction, telling the story of HM Factory Gretna, which during WWI employed over 30,000 people. On a visit, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle proclaimed the lumpy, white substance he saw being mixed (the cordite in every bullet and shell) 'like porridge but of a devilish sort'. Visitors get the chance to handle museum objects for themselves as the curator instructs on everyday care and cleaning of treasured museum objects.

This Experience includes:

- Brief introduction to museum and the objects it holds.
- Demonstration by museum's curator how to conserve special items from WWI medals to autograph books and RAF uniforms.
- Learn to inventory mark objects for posterity and learn how to check for microclimates and how to store objects for future generations.
- Use these skills when you get home for your own treasured possessions.

As ad-ons to the experience, Devil's Porridge offers the possibility of a personal tour of the museum and/or lunch between the tour and the curation experience, making it a day-long event.

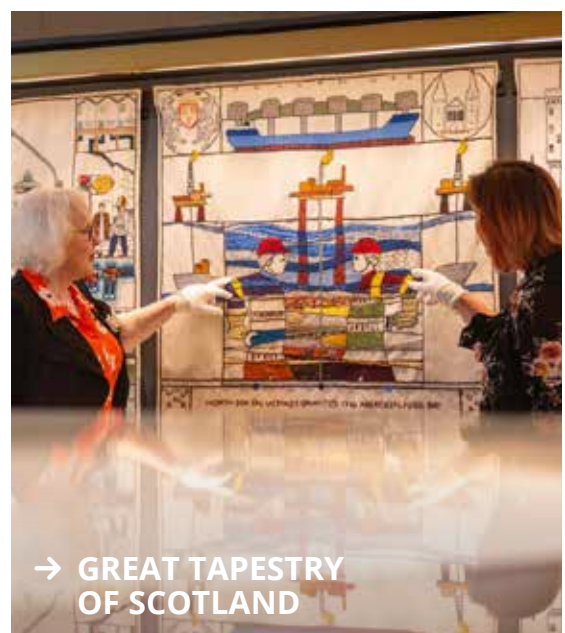
CASE STUDY THE STITCHER'S TALE

Learn the stories behind the people who stitched the Great Tapestry of Scotland.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland (GTOS) is one of the world's largest community arts projects. Opened in 2021, the GTOS displays the history of Scotland in 160 linen panels and over 300 miles of wool. Uniquely the stories of those who stitched the tapestry were gathered by the museum's archivists and it is access to these stories that make this such an authentic experience.

This Experience includes:

- Brief introduction to the Great Tapestry of Scotland.
- Learn the stories of those who stitched the Great Tapestry of Scotland.
- Unique insight into the hidden stitches and what they mean.
- See the icons, images, initials and hidden details added by the stitchers reflecting their own biographies and stories.
- Peruse the tapestry at leisure.
- Lunch at the Stitchers café.



→ GREAT TAPESTRY OF SCOTLAND

STEPS TO CREATE YOUR OWN AUTHENTIC VISITOR EXPERIENCES

The process of experience product development will help you turn your idea into a viable, profitable, sustainable reality.

Going through the process will help save time and resources on ideas which may not be viable, profitable or sustainable. Use the following steps to create your own memorable experience.

1. What is your tourism experience?

What's the Story? Your experience needs to have a title and a distinct theme that sets it apart from more ordinary tourism experiences. If you are targeting an overseas market, think about how the title will translate into different languages.

2. Why would a visitor like the experience?

Experiences must be designed through the eyes of the visitor. Think about what will appeal most to that visitor – what motivates and excites them.

3. What will be included in the experience?

Determine the theme of your experience, e.g. culture, history, heritage, landscape, events, food and wine, adventure and activities and create incentives that make it easy for the customer to take up the offer. Think about and tell the story of your experience and that of your community. Build in as much detail as possible every step of the way. Plan time for interaction, conversation, reflection.

4. Availability.

Work out when you will be offering the package, e.g. daily or scheduled departures, and the time period during which your experience will be available, e.g. low season, midweek, weekends.

5. Partners.

Determine the partners' services and suppliers that you want to build into your experience, such as attractions, accommodation, tours.

6. Pricing.

The total price should reflect all elements of the experience (the goods, services, local partners etc). It is the combination of all these elements that creates a unique and memorable offer that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Make sure you know how many people you need to make the experience profitable and sustainable for your business.

7. Descriptions, conditions and waivers.

Develop clear and concise information on all terms and conditions affecting the provision of the experience. Any conditions outlining responsibility must be clearly expressed in exact terms and details of any specific insurance requirements are also recommended.



→ WELL READ BOOKS,
WIGTOWN

WORK WITH LIKE-MINDED BUSINESSES

Small to Medium Enterprises and microbusinesses dominate the tourism industry so the case for co-operation is strong.

Working with others in tourism can help build your business, attract more customers, enhance their experience and encourage those all important marketing routes – positive word of mouth and reputation.

Great experiences rely on the totality of a customer's time, from their experiences of activities to those eating, shopping and their accommodation. That is why it's vital that tourism businesses work together as much as possible to provide not only practical and functional links to one another's products but also connections between their experiences, so visitors get a seamless and unforgettable experience in the South of Scotland.

Collaboration in tourism works on several levels, from informal relationships all the way up to formal partnerships and even as destination groups. Joint activity can range from simple networking to committing joint funds and resources for mutual gain.

For small businesses, collaboration means the opportunity to punch well above their weight.

Visitors look at the whole picture – accommodation, eating out, shopping, and things to do – when deciding where to go, so collaboration with others, in established or innovative ways, should provide a more joined up offer to attract new visitors and bring them back again. So, working with other tourism businesses and building relationships and links with other service providers, tourism operators can:

- **Broaden your appeal to a larger audience**
- **Increase your visibility and marketing impact.**
- **Explore innovative ideas and new ways of working with a reduced risk.**
- **Share knowledge and experience (and benefit from others' skills).**
- **Gain a competitive edge on other similar destinations.**
- **Create a more rounded offer for promotion.**
- **Attract new markets you couldn't reach on your own.**



CASE STUDY

THE ROMAN'S TALE

Guided walking tour of the site of Britain's most northerly Roman fort, Trimontium.

In AD80 the Romans had their most northerly settlement in the British Isles at Trimontium, outside modern-day Melrose. Finds from this garrison and settlement are housed in the new Trimontium alongside objects loaned by the National Museum collections. This site is one of the most important archaeological discoveries across the whole of Roman Britain. Guides bring actual objects with them to help guests envisage life as a Roman soldier.

This Experience includes:

- Walk in the footsteps of Roman soldiers with a guided tour from Melrose to the site of Trimontium.
- Envisage the northern-most amphitheatre of the Roman Empire.
- See the location of fort's gyrus – a horse training ring.
- Uniquely, guides will bring artefacts to share with you and bring to life the days of the Romans.
- Two-course lunch at Burt's, a popular Melrose eatery.



CASE STUDY

THE WRITER'S TALE

Taste whisky in a hidden room while you tour the house that Sir Walter Scott created at Abbotsford.

The historic home of author Sir Walter Scott, opened to the public in 1833 just five months after his death the previous year. This was the first literary home to open as a visitor attraction in the South of Scotland. Today as you are led on a guided tour of Scott's fascinating 'conundrum castle', you'll gain an insight into how Scott shaped the history of Scotland and uniquely on this tour particularly his influence with reference to whisky.

This Experience includes:

- Start with a guided tour of Scott's home.
- Access the chapel and an exclusive room, not normally accessible to the public.
- Hear stories of Scott's association with whisky.
- Indulge in a wee tippie of Abbotsford's own whisky.
- Tour finishes in walled gardens where guests can continue exploring.
- Guests receive the 64-page guidebook of Abbotsford.

MAKING YOUR EXPERIENCES **BOOKABLE?**

In recent years there has been a real shift in how people book everything from events to activities. Purchasing online is now an essential part of modern life.

Consumers are increasingly booking experiences at short notice and in real time and for maximum impact online, your experiences need to be discoverable and bookable. Is it easy to find your business online? Can the customer then book your experience online?

Just as you need to make it easy for your customers to find and book you, so too do you need to make it easy for your potential or actual Travel Trade partner to work with you rather than your competitors. To succeed in the international market it is vital that your products are bookable, commissionable and available and you are willing to work with the Travel Trade.

BECOMING BOOKABLE, COMMISSIONABLE AND AVAILABLE.

Bookable:

- The product is available to be easily booked in advance. It isn't just available to those customers who turn up on the day.
- It can be built into an itinerary delivered and sold by a tour operator (Business to Business sales).

Commissionable:

- It could be sold directly to the customer (Business to Consumer sales).
- Third parties with a large reach to relevant customers can sell your product on your behalf for a percentage fee between 10% and 30%.

Available:

- The activities are ready to book in real time online.
- and/or the activities can be booked directly by Tour Operators in advance through direct contact.

→ **SELKIRK, THREE BRETHREN**

DIFFERENT BOOKABLE OPTIONS

Online bookable. Products which can be purchased on a regular basis with few restrictions, often for Fully Independent Traveller. These can be entrance fees, regular tours and more. Some online booking channels will allow for a trade discount to be added, i.e. through a dedicated discount code

On request bookings. Some product might have to be booked on a request basis. This might apply to tailored tours, Travel Trade exclusive product or experience, often for groups. Ensure that you respond to any booking enquiries from the trade on the same day if possible. These booking requests are often made far in advance of travel, often one year in advance.

Review your existing product and assess any newly developed product to decide which target sector it might be suitable for: day-to-day individual visitors; tailor made FIT requests; pre-booked groups visits; special interest group visits.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Reinforcing the commerciality of your products and services to be offered to the Travel Trade and to international markets can be achieved by including consistently positive reviews, offering booking options (including mobile phone booking) and demonstration of links to, for example, peer-to-peer tours or activity providers.

Find out more on working with the Travel Trade from the Planning for Inbound Success Toolkit on the SSDA website.

CASE STUDY THE SMUGGLER'S TALE

Take afternoon tea at Gunsgreen House, the home of notorious smuggler John Nisbet.

Gunsgreen House is an imposing Grade A listed Georgian Palladian villa designed by well-known Scottish architect John Adam. It was built in 1753 by John Nisbet, a merchant and notorious smuggler and opened as a visitor attraction in 2009. Market research showed no other afternoon tea experiences in the locality, making this a novel experience for the destination.

This Experience includes:

- Hear the stories of where smugglers once hid their contraband.
- See Nisbet's secret tea chute and hiding places.
- Have an excellent afternoon tea, with a smugglers theme.
- For an additional fee, clients can sample the brand new Gunsgreen House Gin, Gunsgreen Cocktail or Prosecco.



→ GLENTROOL

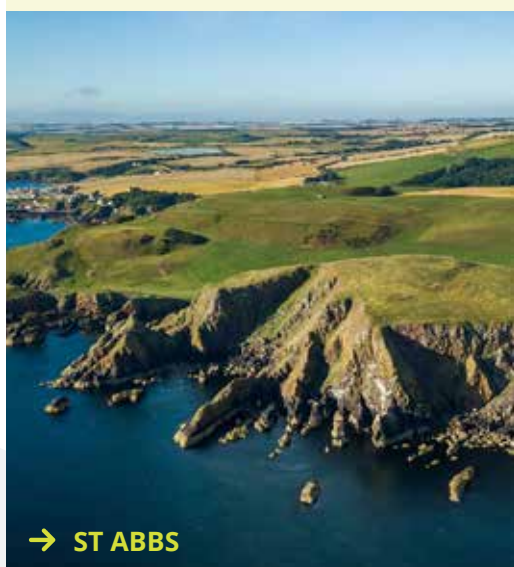
KEY TAKEAWAY - PACKAGE TRAVEL REGULATIONS

If you offer, or allow your customers to buy, at least two of the following elements: transport, accommodation, vehicle hire and other significant visitor service, then you are probably subject to the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018.

These regulations cover circumstances where you sell different elements yourself, work with another business to sell different elements or provide the customer with a targeted offer to purchase an element from another business.

These regulations include specific requirements relating to how you market, book and deliver these products.

There is not a one size fits all solution, VisitBritain web site has more information on the topic - <https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/holiday-packages>



→ ST ABBS

EXPERIENCE CHECKLIST

Creating a competitive offer of experiential tourism incorporates goods and services as elements in developing offers that are designed to create lasting memories.

As you take the steps from selling tourism products to offering tourism experiences use this checklist to assess which attributes you can incorporate into your experience:

- 1. Memorable.** It must have impact, enough to be filed into the most treasured memories of the participants.
- 2. Enriching.** Will the participants feel that they've grown or that their lives have become better as a result of the experience?
- 3. Authentic.** The experience cannot be contrived. It must be real and the people whom they encounter must be real and relevant.
- 4. Interactive.** Are participants involved in the activity, not merely observers being entertained?
- 5. Unique.** Are you offering something which is difficult for the visitor to experience by themselves, without our help?
- 6. Marketing.** How will you market to potential consumers (and the Travel Trade) and what will your main communication with them be?
- 7. How are you going to offer the experience?** As a package? Do you need to partner with another local business, service, or attraction to add value to the experience? Who will you partner with?
- 8. Have you tested your experience with friends, family and colleagues?** You will gain valuable insight that can be used to enhance the experience and 'tweak' where needed.
- 9. Profitable and sustainable.** Is the experience attractive, feasible, profitable, accessible, responsible and sustainable?

NEXT STEPS – MAKING THE MOST OF **THE OPPORTUNITY**

What are you going to do?

Before you start selling your experiences, it's important to understand how they match or fit with visitor demands. In broad terms, there is potential for every product in every market. To help determine which markets offer the best potential for your product and those in your area you must answer these five questions:

1. Is your experience readily accessible to potential customers through the appropriate distribution channels (e.g. how good are your relationships with tour operators, is the quality of your website up to scratch)?
2. How does the target market perform for you at present? Do you have an established track record in servicing it?
3. Can you capitalise on or respond to the trends/ growth patterns/ opportunities in the market?
4. Do your research before you contact a tour operator about working with you. Do they feature the South of Scotland in their programmes? Do they feature similar products and experiences to yours?
5. Look for like-minded businesses and develop collaborative marketing promotions to the target market. Think about how to engage with each other and what they can offer you. How can you work together to benefit all businesses?

→ **SWEET HEART ABBEY,
DUMFRIES**

Credit: Colin Tennant

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

South Of Scotland Destination Alliance

The South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) is the strategic Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the South of Scotland, encompassing Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders.

If you'd like to keep up to date with South of Scotland Destination Alliance Travel Trade opportunities, please contact:

traveltrade@ssdalliance.com

ssdalliance.com/travel-trade

USEFUL WEB SITES

VisitScotland	traveltrade.visitscotland.org www.visitscotland.org/research-insights
VisitBritain	trade.visitbritain.com
South of Scotland Enterprise	southofscotlandenterprise.com/support
Independent Tour Operators Association	aito.com
Scottish Destination Management Association	scotland-sdma.org.uk
Scottish Tourism Alliance	scottishtourismalliance.co.uk
UK Inbound	www.ukinbound.org



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JEAN ARMOUR

1765 - 1834

WIFE OF ROBERT BURNS

ERECTED BY
BURNS HOWFF CLUB
SEPTEMBER 2004

→ JEAN ARMOUR, STATUE, DUMFRIES



**SOUTH of
SCOTLAND**

**DESTINATION
ALLIANCE**