

Wish
you
were
here!

INTRODUCTION



In 2011, approximately 7.3 million overseas visitors came to the island of Ireland. This was an increase of 7% on 2010. Total tourism revenue was approximately €3.4 billion, of which 59% was from overseas markets.

Data for January and February 2012 show that total volume is almost unchanged from last year, with a marginal increase (+0.5%). January and February usually account for 10% of the annual total. 2012 arrivals from Britain are up by 2% while other main source markets are soft.

Looking at prospects for the coming years, **Fáilte Ireland** and **Tourism Ireland** have emphasised that Ireland's future performance will hinge on achieving success in the overseas markets. With a static home market set to continue, developing more business in overseas markets is a key growth strategy for Irish tourism businesses that are suited to overseas visitors.

Sales Connect – Know Your Markets is a collaborative project from Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. Aimed at tourism businesses who want to grow overseas business, it provides all the information you need to understand and target overseas customers, know how customers can buy from you, and develop a sales action plan to promote your product or service overseas.

Why the focus on just four overseas markets?

Between them, GB, the US, Germany and France account for over 70% of all holiday visits to the island of Ireland. Consequently, these four markets account for 75% of Tourism Ireland's marketing spend.



Great Britain is central to future tourism performance as it represents half of our overseas visitors. The size of the potential market in Britain, coupled with a common language and close proximity to Ireland, dictates the need to regain market share. There are growth opportunities in GB, particularly around London and the Southeast, where prospects are stronger. The GB market grew by 5% in 2011.



The US market, which grew by 7% in 2011, also offers potential for recovery and growth based on the current demand patterns of an upturn in travel to Europe. Ireland can gain share as the US economy strengthens and the high spending American tourist is critical for many businesses in Ireland.



European tourism to Ireland grew by 9.6% in 2011 and all indicators are that 2012 will be a good year for Irish tourism from Germany. France performed well in 2011 with a return to growth of +17%. Germany is the world's largest outbound travel market and Ireland is well regarded in both Germany and France.

What if I want to target a different market?

While this guide outlines the process for growing your overseas business from the four key source markets, the process is broadly the same if you wish to target other overseas markets. If you are interested in other markets including other European markets or Australia and Developing Markets, you can still follow most of the tips and advice that you will read in this guide. For example, the recent announcement by The Taoiseach of the visa waiver extension for China, India, the 6 GCC countries and 10 other countries is a major development to help grow tourism business from developing markets. The visa waiver extension, until October 2016 and the introduction of a short-stay visa for individual travellers from China will encourage visitors from emerging markets, like China, to visit Ireland when they are visiting the UK, without the hassle or cost of applying for a separate visa. See www.tourismireland.com for information on other markets.

How to get the most from Sales Connect – Know Your Markets

Sales Connect – Know Your Markets is written in a style that allows you to “dip in and out” of the sections that are most relevant to you. If, for example, you are only interested in the French market, you should read the sections on ‘France’, ‘Travel Distribution’ and ‘Building Relationships and Promoting your Business Overseas’. If you want to grow business in both Germany and France, you should read both market sections as well as the sections on ‘Travel Distribution’ and ‘Building Relationships and Promoting your Business Overseas’. Targeting the overseas markets is very different to driving business from the domestic market and may appear daunting. However, when you break the process down you’ll see that there are just 3 steps to follow:

Step 1: Researching and knowing your overseas market

- Knowing the profiles of the GB, US, German and French travel markets.
- Identifying the target market segments for Irish holidays.
- Understanding how tourists plan and purchase their holiday.
- Identifying air and sea access from the target markets to Ireland.
- Knowing who are the main tour operators that programme Ireland.

Step 2: Understanding the distribution channels

- Demystifying the jargon of travel distribution.
- Understanding how to work with the travel trade – both online and offline.
- Developing a distribution strategy for your business.

Step 3: Building relationships and promoting your business

- Working with local partners to showcase your product.
- Learning how to promote your product overseas through in-market and in-Ireland workshops, fam. trips, media visits etc.
- Making the most of trade and consumer fairs and making effective sales calls.
- Getting involved in cooperative activity with Tourism Ireland.

**DO**

1. Do your research – know as much as possible about the end consumer and your overseas trade partner.
2. Put yourself in your customer's shoes - know how your product matches their needs and how you can give them a unique Irish holiday experience.
3. Inform yourself about access by air, sea, road and rail. Know about new flights to for your nearest airports and remember to inform your customers of journey times.
4. Create bundled offerings with complementary local tourism businesses to add value and make it easy for your customer to buy. Design them around the unique experiences you offer.
5. Create a mix of distribution channels. Develop relationships with Irish incoming tour operators, overseas tour operators and travel agents, online travel agents (OTAs) etc.
6. Make sure your website and social media activities are tailored to your overseas target markets to drive direct sales.
7. Tell your customers everything that they need to know in their own language.
8. Engage fully with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to make the most of advertising, co-operative marketing, publicity and PR opportunities.
9. Treat your relationships with your trade partners professionally and always think of the life-time value of those relationships.
10. Give your overseas customers a unique Irish holiday experience. They will tell their friends who may come back to you next year!

**DON'T**

1. Assume overseas customers are the same as domestic visitors and don't underestimate the power of the Irish welcome for overseas visitors.
2. Attempt to sell in overseas markets without prior planning or preparation and don't contact overseas tour operators if you are not committed to servicing them properly.
3. Be afraid to ask tour operators for the business!
4. Invest in overseas promotion without having a measurement technique in place.
5. Ignore the importance of online review sites or bury your head in the sand if you get a negative review.

Before you get started – key questions to ask yourself:

1. Have I become too reliant on the domestic leisure market?
2. Has my share of business from GB, the US, Germany or France fallen by more than the market performance generally?
3. Do I find myself saying "I used to get a lot of overseas business, and they really liked my product, but that business has fallen away."
4. Do you think to yourself "although I have never sold in the overseas markets, I want to position myself for the upturn and better manage my mix of domestic and overseas business"?
5. Has access to my business improved through a combination of new air routes, road improvements and additional or enhanced rail services?
6. If you joined forces with a number of other tourism providers in your area do you feel that, together, you can offer overseas tourists a truly unique and memorable Irish holiday experience?

If the answer is 'yes', it's a good time to reassess your overseas market potential!



Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland - Who Does What?

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland work together in strategic partnership for the development and promotion of the Irish tourism industry. Each agency has a distinct role and remit, and each complements the work of the other to expand Ireland's valuable tourism market.

Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority was established to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. The organisation provides strategic and practical support to develop and sustain Ireland as a high quality and competitive tourist destination. Fáilte Ireland works in strategic partnership with tourism interests to support the industry in its efforts to be more competitive and more profitable and to help individual enterprises to enhance their performance.

Tourism Ireland is the agency responsible for marketing the island of Ireland as a holiday destination overseas. They devise and implement world-class marketing programmes and provide industry partners with opportunities to market their own products and services working closely with the Tourism Ireland teams in over 20 markets overseas. In addition, they are a source of information on overseas market trends and consumer needs, which they make available to Fáilte Ireland, the NITB and to other industry partners.

The **Northern Ireland Tourist Board** is the strategic leader for tourism in Northern Ireland and works in partnership with stakeholders to market Northern Ireland within the island of Ireland and improve the visitor experience.

Practical supports

Sales Connect – Know Your Markets includes templates and checklists to help devise a focused and measurable overseas sales strategy.

Most of the information has been sourced from the research departments of Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. The corporate websites, www.failteireland.ie and www.tourismireland.com, feature additional information on the four main markets as well as research on all other markets for Ireland.

Every effort has been made to ensure the details contained in this guide are accurate and up-to-date as at time of print (June 2012). However, given the nature of tourism, many details are subject to change. It is therefore recommended that you validate all facts and figures before finalising any business decisions.