



# Expert Tips to grow your group sales

By **GroupTourMedia** publisher of *Group Tour Magazine* & *Student Group Tour* magazine

## Be a *group-friendly* supplier

The group industry is competitive. Nevertheless, every supplier can enhance their tour-attracting powers by demonstrating they are the *group-friendly* choice. Here's how:



### Be creative

Tours want more than sightseeing, a meal, and a place to sleep. They want *memorable experiences*. They want something to post on social media and brag about when they get home. Theaters can give a tour behind stage. Zoos can offer the chance to pet or feed an animal or chat with a keeper. Restaurants can share a recipe for a regional specialty (perhaps served as an appetizer) or a cooking presentation.

### Form partnerships

Partnerships make you a stronger option: A botanic garden with a nice meeting space can partner with restaurant that offers box lunches to become a great midday stop that both entertains *and* feeds a group. Research all of the attractions and activities in your area (including the average travel times from your site) so you can sell yourself as, say, the hotel that's right around the corner from great shopping or the restaurant that's five minutes away from the "must-see" landmark.



### Welcome site inspections

Many tour planners won't even consider taking a group to a new destination without a site inspection. Don't grumble or charge for inspections. Site inspections are an opportunity to show planners firsthand you are the *best choice*.

*Bonus box:*

### Be FAM-tabulous

If your local CVB is conducting a FAM (familiarization) tour, get on the itinerary! It's a great way to identify hot prospects.

### Be unique

Put yourself in the shoes of the tour planner. The planner's biggest challenge is to organize a *profitable* tour: meaning a tour that many people will want to buy at a price that includes a profit for the planner. Planners crave splashy, new, or distinctive offerings that will grab the attention of the potential tour guest.



### Be a booster

Promote your area first and your individual business second. To keep transportation times low, groups prefer areas with multiple attractions clustered together. Make a list of what's group-friendly in your area and keep it handy so you're prepared when a planner calls. It's helpful to know how much time a planner should budget at all your top attractions. The first step to making a sale is getting the group to come to your area.

### Be flexible

Give planners good dates. Tours are a great way to fill your off- and shoulder-season, but be careful you don't lose group business by being stingy with your bookings. Also, if a group just misses your group count, let it slide. The goodwill you will generate is priceless.

### Offer compelling extras

Small goodies make you stand out from your competitors.

- Refreshments, a gift or bonus for everyone on the tour. Drink/breakfast vouchers will keep the group in your property. A coupon will entice the group to visit your gift shop.
- An exclusive peek "behind the scenes" at your business.
- A costumed greeter or special photo opportunity. (Nowadays, all ages are into cool selfies.)
- The services of a docent with good storytelling skills to escort the tour.
- Explanation and samples of regional food specialties.
- Craft/manufacturing demonstrations also serve to raise the perceived value of your offerings.
- VIP treatment. All guests want to feel welcome.  
**A little extra attention will make your business truly group-friendly.**



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