

# Designing and Marketing Low Season Tourism Experiences

**Interreg**   
France ( Channel  
Manche ) England  
**EXPERIENCE**  
European Regional Development Fund

Prof. Xavier Font  
Jean-Moussa Lucas  
David Cloarec





# Content Page

This manual is organised in six key messages:

01



**Products, make way for experiences.**

Products are so yesterday, and customers want to engage with your offering with all their senses.

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**Different seasons, different markets.**

You will need to adapt your offer to different types of customer to balance changes in demand.

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03



**There's something special about your place in the low season.**

We often take for granted what's on our doorsteps, so let's look at your resources with fresh eyes and see how you can turn them into something special.

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**Let's design innovative experiences.**

You will need to create experiences that are great, even when it's cold, wet, and dark early. Co-create experiences with nearby partners and use events to drive demand.

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**Time for marketing and storytelling.**

New experiences require a lot of marketing effort, but if they are truly innovative and you've communicated them well, consumers will share the messages for you.

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**Be clear what benefits you expect.**

Visualising the results you want to achieve will help you have the determination you need to make changes.

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# 06

Be clear what benefits you expect.



Visualising the results you want to achieve will help you have the determination to make changes and deliver great benefits for your destination.

We hope you have found the ideas in this manual of use. It's now time to decide which changes to implement in your organisation. An investment of your time and effort, and taking the risk to make changes, can bring you worthwhile rewards.

Visualising the results you want to achieve will help you have the determination to make changes and deliver great benefits for your destination.





# Reducing seasonality has a wealth of benefits.

## There are many reasons to innovate.



Our interviews with all the organisations this report features led us to identify six key objectives that are commonly found amongst those that are willing to innovate.

- **Generate a year-round income.** Create unique products and diversify your markets to provide continuity to your business.
- **Improve the quality of your service.** Create year-

round jobs to give your business the opportunity to retain talented staff and to reduce your recruitment and training costs.

- **Maintain your mid-season prices.** Increase the quality, variety and attractiveness of your offer so that you don't need to reduce your prices.
- **Provide a consistent service.** Open all year round to allow your business to set service standards and professionalise its service.

- **Be more creative.** Open in the low season to give yourself the chance to experiment with changes in your products that you might find too risky or time consuming in high season.
- **Increase loyalty.** Open all year round to gain more repeat customers as they favour businesses that are reliably open.



# We open year-round to secure staff jobs and guarantee the quality of service.

Philippe De Bellevue is the Commercial Director of Les Ormes Domaine and Resort (FR).

## What we do:

Originally, the Domaine des Ormes was a campsite with about 60 pitches. Today we have made full use of our 200 hectares of land, with a capacity of 3,500 visitors per day and an average of 60,000 visitors per year. In recent years, we have worked particularly hard on our winter capacity by creating low season activities.

## How we do it:

One of the main objectives of our development strategy has always been human resources. We are a family business and we are aware of how central people are to our entire experience. Operating on a year-round basis has always been our ambition, to be able to offer permanent contracts to our nearly 100 staff.

- In 1989, we decided to develop a golf course to enable us to generate activity all year round.
- In 2004, we opened an equestrian centre that has a hybrid operation: accessible to campsite residents during the summer period, it continues to operate independently during the low season.
- In 2020, we created a dome covering our 4,500m<sup>2</sup> water complex, which allowed us to keep our outdoor accommodation open all year round and, especially, our quirky accommodation such as water huts, tree houses and “cottage huts”, which are in high demand all year round.



## Our Tips:

Hiring seasonal workers can pose significant challenges in terms of quality, continuity and integration/training. Switching to be an annual operator, combined with training and investing in teams, can allow you to maintain the highest level of service quality and customer satisfaction.

- We have developed motorhome areas to meet the needs of a market that prefers the intimacy of the low season to the summer crowds.
- We have also cultivated a significant offer for business tourism that has the right hosting capacity, meeting spaces, both classic and atypical, as well as numerous team-building activities, both indoors and outdoors.

We have even gone so far as to open a training centre on our site to enhance the skills of our teams and offer them real prospects for career development. As proof, many of our current managers arrived as seasonal workers; some of them over 30 years ago.







# We create gift vouchers to generate low season demand.

Isabel Sanchez is the Site Manager at the “spa cabins in the trees” Pella Roca (FR).



## What we do:

We have created a unique site of unusual accommodation: spa cabins in the trees overlooking nine hectares of truffle fields, moorland and forest. Our product itself is usable all year round, particularly as each of the cabins has its own private ecological stove, spa and jacuzzi.

Even though our product can be used all year round, traffic is naturally highest from March to October. Our gift vouchers, with their specific conditions such as their validity over a two-year period, at any time except “high-season”, weekends and subject to availability, do an amazing job to fill those months.

## How we do it:

Our offer corresponds in every way to the expectations of exceptional gifts: disconnection, nature bath, well-

being, unusual experience, high-end product but accessible for a particular occasion. It is the type of gift that suits romantic lovers, newlyweds, anniversaries or even young retirees in search of new sensations.

It is a gift that is easy to give and always makes an impact. As a result, more than 25% of our bookings come from gift vouchers that we sell directly on our website. As our cabins are in high demand, the summer periods are sometimes booked more than a year in advance, which means that the vouchers naturally fill our slower periods. Beyond the practicality for us, recipients of these gift vouchers tend to take time out of the usual seasons to enjoy this unique experience rather than approaching it as just a holiday destination.



## Our Tips:

It is important to create a sense of uniqueness for these gift vouchers. Although the accommodation itself is an experience, we offer the possibility to personalise each voucher, be it with additional a la carte services, personalisation of the message or the choice of the basic package. The primary motivation for people purchasing a gift voucher is to make it a unique and personal gift.



## Task 6:

### Make space to think creatively.

It's time for you to prioritise what you will take away from this manual, and use it in your organisation.

Before you opened this manual, you already knew many of the things we said, but there's always a reason why you don't get around to do it. We hope that seeing them in black and white, with case studies to inspire you, gives you the motivation to make changes. You know that your organisation will benefit from it, and that you'll get a greater sense of achievement for having done something innovative.

1. Consider the list of objectives below and rank the items from most to least important:

- Year-round income
- Better quality of your service
- Reliably high mid-season prices
- Consistent service
- More creative
- Better customer loyalty

2. Reflect on your work practices. Write down the last innovative things you have done, identify which of the six objectives above these innovations contributed towards, and how successful they were.

3. Now identify one example from the previous case studies that you can adapt to your business to achieve the benefits that matter the most to you. Aim to replicate the easiest example, that requires the least amount of effort.

Only once you've succeeded, move to the second easiest, and so on.

4. Make a list of tasks that you need to do, in order to replicate that example. Write down how long you think each task will take, and whether they are recurring or one off-tasks.

5. Schedule time in your calendar for these tasks, at times that you can clearly protect to do them. Make this a realistic plan to minimise the chances of deviate from it. If you fail to do something once, get back on track and never miss twice.

6. Share your plan with someone else, and it's important that make a commitment to that person that you will stick to your plan, and that they hold you accountable to it. Check in with your "innovation buddy" weekly or monthly, to share your progress.