



Unit 6: Specialist Tourism

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

Specialist tourism is a key growth area of the travel and tourism industry, where innovation and niche markets work together to create ever more interesting ways to spend leisure time. In this optional unit, learners consider the impact of specialist tourism on the industry as a whole. They examine different trends and their relative importance, and examine the roles of marketing and media. You will also be encouraging learners to investigate emerging markets to see how travel and tourism is still evolving over time with changing tastes, levels of income, ease of travel and increasing numbers of tourists and leisure hours.

Learners will develop geographical knowledge of emerging destinations and identify the role of modern technology in creating and maintaining their appeal. Learners will be able to consider current trends, possible future trends and emerging markets. You may have local specialist tour operators willing to speak to your learners, via Skype perhaps, or you can look at online specialist tour operators to investigate the growth of different areas of specialist tourism.

Centres should ensure that learners individually have internet access for this unit.

Delivering the learning aims

Learning aim A

Investigate the variety of specialist tourism choices and providers, starting by giving learners a basic understanding of the specialist tourism sector and its capacity for rapid change as tastes and markets develop. You have massive scope here to introduce different types of specialism. While it would not be possible to consider all in depth, you can give your learners an awareness of the variety within the sector, and the variety of people to whom specialist tourism can appeal. You will need to include both natural and built attractions in a range of destinations and help learners find out where in the world they are and establish their links to specialist tourism. You could focus on a few well-known but contrasting locations and types of activity that appeal to different groups of people. This will give your learners a better understanding of the scope of the industry than going through all the examples listed in the specification superficially.

Using both your own and your learners' personal experiences as a starting point, you can then contrast these with other groups of people, types of interest and locations. It is important that you encourage learners to look at customer types, locations and the activities customers undertake there as a holistic travel and tourism experience, while acknowledging the different variables.

The second part of learning aim A considers the impact of online travel agencies and online booking on specialist tourism. It is worth noting that tour operations will include both niche and mass market operators, and will also vary according to location and customer type.

You can ask your learners to use the internet to find relevant information and organisations, as many specialist tourist sites and tour operators are new to the market and will not feature in textbooks or other printed materials. You will need to discuss with your learners alternative terms for specialist tourism (e.g. niche tourism, special interest tourism, customised tourism) to help them carry out their searches.

Learning aim B

Explore the scale, scope and growth of specialist tourism and move on to consider how the sector has grown. Different groups of people are more likely to be attracted to certain types of holiday and destination. Equally, some locations/destinations are more suitable for a particular specialism and have utilised this to create or maintain a successful tourism industry. Learners will focus on demographic trends and the influence of media and review sites on the growth of a form of specialist tourism in two destinations. Your learners will need a basic knowledge of where in the world these destinations are, so a refresher on the basics of continental and oceanic locations will be useful.

To gain a greater understanding of the suitability of a destination for a particular specialism, learners will also need to investigate other factors such as climate, flora, fauna and landscapes.

Learning aim C

Examine the durability and potential impact of key types of specialist tourism. Then consider how long specific specialist tourism activities are likely to be viable for, and how this will affect both the tourists and host locations/ destinations. Learners should look at all the impacts – economic, environmental and social/cultural – including any infrastructure remaining at a host destination once the specialist activity declines.

You may need to help your learners improve their research and presentation skills to create a destination-specific presentation for their assessment. You can encourage learners to choose a destination that they have either been to or wish to go to, to personalise their learning and help them go into the topic in depth. (This learning aim lends itself to depth rather than breadth, in contrast to learning aim A.) Locating a relevant tour operator is more likely to be successful by searching for the type of specialist tourism (rather than the term ‘specialist tourism’ itself).



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Investigate the variety of specialist tourism choices and providers	A1 Definition of specialist tourism A2 Independent tour operators A3 Mass-market tour operators who have entered the specialist tourism market A4 The impact of online travel agencies (OTA) and online booking on specialist tourism	A report investigating the variety of providers in the specialist tourism sector and their different roles. Focusing on four different attractions (two natural and two built), the report will also investigate the role of OTAs and online booking in these choices.
B Explore the scale, scope and growth of specialist tourism	B1 Customer demographic taking specialist tourism holidays B2 Growth of numbers in specialist tourism from the UK, Europe and worldwide (through the 21st century) B3 Types of holidays and destinations in specialist tourism B4 The role of media and review sites in the development of specialist tourism	A presentation with accompanying maps, graphs or charts, which considers the demographic trends, role of media and review sites, and identification of key destinations for specialist tourism.
C Examine the durability and impact of key types of specialist tourism	C1 Specialisms with durability and contemporary specialism choices C2 Longevity of destination C3 Potential impact of specialist tourism on destination	A presentation with accompanying speaker notes, focusing on the durability and potential impact of key types of specialist tourism on a destination in relation to three specialist areas.

Assessment guidance

The recommended assessment of this unit is through three internally assessed assignments. Assignments are holistic for this qualification, so tasks should not prescribe pass, merit or distinction criteria, but allow learners to achieve all the criteria by completing the task in full.

Learning aim A could be undertaken as a written report, which will utilise investigation skills to look at providers and their roles within the specialist sector. Learners will need to look specifically at four different attractions relevant to specialist tourism (two built and two natural), in different geographical regions, which should be carefully chosen to ensure they meet all of the criteria to be awarded. Learners should be encouraged to search for relevant key terms and then to critically evaluate whether their search returns relate to the topic being studied and whether they come from a source they can trust/respect.

Learning aim B could be produced as a presentation including a range of data presentation methods to show and evaluate trends and changes over time. This should include numbers of people and locations/destinations in terms of specialist tourism holidays, and the role media and review sites potentially play in influencing customer choices (see websites in Resources list).

Learning aim C looks for depth over breadth in an in-depth study involving research into the durability of one destination offering three different specialist tourism activities. Learners could present their findings using photo evidence (primary or secondary) to identify and demonstrate impacts. As specialist tourism is at the cutting edge of travel and tourism, there is a reasonable case for learners to present this as an audio-visual experience to their peers, or to someone from the industry as a pitch-style competition event; the presentation can be videoed by the centre, if preferred, to provide sufficient evidence along with speaker notes without the need for lengthy observation reports.



Getting started

This gives you a starting point for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Unit 6: Specialist Tourism
Introduction This unit can be used to inspire learners about the future direction for the travel and tourism industry, which is experiencing a rapid growth in demand for specialist tourism. One way of starting this thought process is to use a timeline made up of images that shows how tourism began in your home country, then the advent of air transport and the development of mass-market tourism, and concluding if relevant with the whole range of mass-market deals on offer at the turn of the 21st century. Ask learners: 'Why did people want more than this? Why were these options no longer appealing enough to people when we had a break from work/paid holiday time?' Allow learners to write and post their ideas on sticky notes to start off the discussion. Try to come to some valid conclusions as to why people wanted more than the standard mass-market holiday package.
Learning aim A: Investigate the variety of specialist tourism choices and providers
- For content area A1, create a set of images relating to the unit content. Give learners a set of 'traffic light' cards (red/no, amber/maybe, green/yes). Show them the images of each type of specialist activity and ask whether they think it is a type of specialist tourism. Bear in mind you may need more than one image of each activity to get your message across. Get learners to justify their use of red, amber or green in response to each image and say why they think it is or is not a type of specialist tourism. Conclude the activity by devising a definition of specialist tourism. - Give each learner one type of specialist tourism to investigate. Then put them to 'expert' groups of five. Ask each learner to explain the key elements of the type of specialist tourism to their group so that they are each 'experts' in these five types of tourism. Create 'jigsaw' groups made of different 'experts' who are able to recount five types of specialist tourism to one another. This means all learners have developed their research skills, listening skills and delivery skills in the task, allowing them to use these as part of the presentation techniques required later on in the unit. - Discuss the merits of customising holidays if you wish to explore, learn or be adventurous – why would this be a sensible choice of holiday, and what are the drawbacks of customising? Encourage learners to think critically about cost versus desire. - For three selected specialist tourism activities, ask learners to identify their ideal customer (i.e. socio-economic group, age, gender where applicable, although challenge stereotyping). Encourage learners to personify this ideal customer in a pen-portrait – including giving him/her/them name(s), if desired. What is the appeal of the particular specialist activity for this customer? Ask learners to present their ideas to the group and share why they have created their customer in the way they have. As a group, decide what sort of marketing would work best for this customer and try to justify this. - Use a sorting-style activity to separate built ('manmade') attractions from natural attractions – these could be words or images, according to your learners' needs, or a mix of both. Use the lists under the relevant bullet points in the specification to guide your selection. Once learners have sorted the attractions into the two primary groups, give learners the sub-categories from the unit content of topographic sites, climate zones/sites, events etc and ask them to sort the attractions further. You can do this second stage as two separate activities – first natural attractions and then built attractions – if your learners are likely to become confused. - Ask learners to name as many of each type of site/event as they can (you can make this a competition if your learners are so inclined), e.g. mountains: Mount Everest, Mont Blanc, Matterhorn. Some may need access to research materials, depending on their level of knowledge.

- Ask learners to select one site/event they believe is significant for specialist tourism and ask them to locate it on a world map (A3 or larger), using an atlas if needed. This will develop their mapping skills and their geographical knowledge of the world. Learners could consider different types of specialism for each sub-category.
- For content area A2, ask learners to use the internet to identify established and new-to-market independent specialist tour operators and their specialism. Where possible, ask learners to record their findings in a database or a spreadsheet; this will further develop their information communication technology (ICT) skills and will be useful to learners throughout the unit.
- Split learners into three groups. Gather ideas through a mind map activity asking why independent tour operators: (1) are important within the travel and tourism industry; (2) are beneficial if you are the customer; (3) create issues for both the customer and the travel and tourism industry. Point (3) may suit higher ability learners or learners who are able to work more quickly than their peers. Learners can research further.
- For content area A3, facilitate a role-play exercise: 'What's in it for us?'
 - Organise learners into three groups.
 - Ask group 1 to take on the role of a mass-market tour operator (either an operator available on the high street or online) and to establish what merits there are for them in investing time, effort and money into diversifying into specialist tourism.
 - Ask group 2 to take on the role of the management team of the independent specialist tour operator. These are available through the same high street agents (although they also have an online presence). Ask learners to identify the potential issues that may arise for them.
 - Ask group 3 to take on the role of customers who want to book a specialist holiday but are not sure whether going to the mass-market tour operator is a good idea or not.
 - Select a learner to question the groups (or you as the tutor can do this, if you prefer). Try to ensure that the questioning draws out the drawbacks and/or merits for each named group, and whether this is going to be of benefit (or not) for consumers and the industry.
- For content area A4, ask learners to research online booking facilities on both specialist tour operators' and travel agents' websites. Some Travel Association, produce reports each year about current trends and how booking habits have changed the travel and tourism industry as a whole (see Resources list). Learners could be encouraged to display their findings as graphs to practise for learning aim B tasks.



Learning aim B: Explore the scale, scope and growth of specialist tourism

- For content area B1, introduce this topic with Ian Yeoman's TED talk (see videos in Resources list) before looking at current online statistics for both customer profiles and numbers of travellers. These will change annually as the market changes.
- For content area B2, encourage learners to debate which of the reasons for growth are more important (or whether other, more important factors have come into play since the specification was written). Ask learners to conduct some research to find out which countries in the world are growing economically. They could look at statistics on Gross Domestic Product (GDP); ask learners how GDP figures relate to the increasing wealth of some sections in a society. Learners will be able to research reasons for past growth quite easily, but will have to look at contemporary sources such as news reports and travel journals (e.g. *Travel Weekly*) to obtain current information. You can ask learners to profile changing family groups (e.g. 'blended' families, increasing numbers of older people) and the impact of this and respective travel times on the popularity of destinations).
- For content area B3, ask learners to locate and map key destinations for different types of specialist tourism. Define what makes a destination a key specialist destination. How significant are differing demographics, for instance Western Europe's ageing population?
- Annotate the map and draw links between host or tourist-receiving countries and tourist-generating countries on it (or on additional maps) to see how they vary and to look for any emerging patterns. Learners will need data for destinations – this may be easier to find by deciding on the destination and looking up data for the specific place, rather than trying to locate large datasets via a search engine.
- For content area B4, encourage learners to collect and collate primary data relating to social media. Ask each learner to talk to people from selected age groups (stratified sampling) rather than just their peers, who will usually all be about the same age and so sway the data. Where possible, guide learners to collect a small dataset based on one or two factors such as demographic parameters, e.g. age, gender, and also the types of social media account held by each respondent, and then analyse these data.
- Ask each learner to identify a specialist tourism operator to research. They should then access the review site and gather a subset of respondents; you may need to do this as it can require the creation of accounts. Talk them through the reviews. Look at the ages of the reviewers (this is often public in sub-groupings) and analyse this. Discuss the results and how they match up with learners' expectations; were the preconceived ideas of the learners correct?
- Select a current news report such as a more up-to-date version of the example from *The Telegraph* (UK) or a local/national news report in the website resources list. Ask learners: 'How do top 10 lists like this one affect people and their view of a holiday?' Consider positives and negatives in terms of how people may view this as being 'specialist'.
- How has advertising and promotion changed during our lifetimes? Ask learners to recall adverts they saw as children and think about how social media has changed what they see in terms of advertisements and promotions, and also when they see these. Ask learners if they were to book a holiday, what likely impact will social media have on their choices? Consider how social media influences may become increasingly important for the specialist tourism sector.

Learning aim C: Examine the durability and impact of key types of specialist tourism

- For content areas C1 and C2, ask learners to think of specialist holidays that are no longer of interest or popular anymore – why did they decline or fall out of popularity? How might this reasoning be used to identify places that will not be popular in the future? Can travel organisations plan for this and, if so, how? How might demographic and socio-economic changes influence this? What role might technology play in the future in terms of travel, transport and activities? Watch the TED talk ‘The future of tourism’ (see Resources for full details) as a stimulus to lead learners to answer these questions. Ask learners to debate the future of particular types of specialist tourism destinations (such as the concept of emerging trends or a greying market, which means that bungee jumps/adventure tourism may become less appealing).
- For content area C3, select two places that are currently a destination for specialist tourism – use something obvious like Amsterdam and Mount Everest. Split learners into six ‘expert’ groups. Ask each group to think about one of the following impacts for both destinations: the economic, socio-cultural and ecological/environmental impacts, positive and negative. Also consider infrastructure development and the demographic range of visitors. Are they the same for each destination? How can potential impacts vary and is this surprising?
- Create ‘jigsaw’ groups made of different ‘experts’ who are able to teach their ‘expert’ impact for both destinations to one another so that all learners know about all six types of impacts for both destinations.



Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to:

- Unit 1: The Travel and Tourism Industry
- Unit 2: Worldwide Travel and Tourism Destination
- Unit 7: Sustainable Tourism

Employer involvement

This unit would benefit from employer involvement in the form of:

- guest speakers
- work experience.

Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International in Travel and Tourism. Check the Pearson website (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources>) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Textbooks

Agarwal, S, Busby, G, Huang, R (eds) – *Special Interest Tourism: Concepts, Contexts and Cases* (CABI, 2018) ISBN 9781780645667

Journals

Computer Weekly – search online for ‘Computer Weekly feature online holiday booking boom lifts e business prospects’ (you may need to register with *Computer Weekly* to read this article, but access is free)

Travel Weekly – search online for ‘Travel Weekly 80% booking holidays online study finds’ – see content area A5

Newspapers/News report

International and local newspapers or news report

Videos

Search YouTube for ‘The future of tourism Ian Yeoman at TED x Groningen’

Search YouTube for ‘video commercial of medical tourism by KPJ health care hospital’

Websites

ABTA – search for ‘ABTA reveals online holiday booking habits’ (statistics for online booking habits 2012–2013)

ABTA – search for ‘booking via tablets surges’ (an article exploring the surge in booking via tablets 2013–2014)

ABTA – search for ‘travel trends 2018’ (an annually updated travel trends report)



Responsible Travel – search for ‘the rise of specialist tour operators’ (an article that serves as a good introduction to some types of tourism in the specialist market)

Travelopia – good for mass-market tourism in the specialist market; see learning aim A

Visit England tourism for current England key facts and trends – for learning aim B, booklet graphs showing trends

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutors bookmark useful websites and consider enabling students to access them through the school/college intranet.