



GET BREXIT READY

**DRIVING SALES
DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH SITE VISITS AND
FAMILIARISATION TRIPS**



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



Site Visits and Familiarisation (Fam) Trips provide a really valuable opportunity to support your sales development strategy. They are probably one of the most effective ways to convert new business from Traditional Tour Operator, Travel Agent and Destination Management Company (DMC)/Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) channels.

A Site Visit or Fam Trip visit gives you the undivided attention of the buyer onsite at your property where they can see and touch the product and experience the service delivery and get a feel for the atmosphere and ethos of the business.

However, they are only effective if your offering is a right match for the buyer's needs and if you and the entire team at your business are fully engaged and can deliver a stellar experience, presentation and sales pitch of your business offering.



TOP TIP: The Power and Potential of Fam Trips and Site Inspections

One of the biggest challenges in sales is how to get a buyer to create time to sample your business offering. Thousands of businesses offer these opportunities to buyers and media all the time from hundreds of destinations, but the diary of a buyer means they don't often get time to take up on these opportunities. So having a Site Visit or Fam Trip opportunity presented to you, especially one that involves a number of buyers or a media publication of note, is a huge opportunity and not to be taken lightly. It requires detailed and focused consideration and planning and complete engagement by all of your team. Asking questions to better understand the buyer needs is invaluable. So tailor your pitch to suit those visiting and at the same time demonstrate a genuine interest in their business. Remember if a Site Visit or Fam Trip is poorly planned and goes badly, not only can you fail to convert business, but it can be damaging to your business reputation.

Remember you only get one chance to impress. First impressions might be the only impression.

Site Visits/Inspections

A Site Visit (referred to as Inspection also) involves the buyer inspecting the product or service he/she is considering to contract so they get a feel for the physical product or get to sample the experience as well as meeting the key people involved in sales and operational service delivery. This allows those visiting to garner insight into whether they think your offering is a match for their customer preferences.

Site Inspections or Site Visits are most often conducted for Professional Travel Buyers (Tour Operator, Travel Agent, Destination Management Company (DMC), Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) and Direct Corporate Bookers). Different buyers will have different priority areas of the product or service they will need to be shown. For example, a Professional Conference Organiser will need to see the meeting and conference facilities, know detail of room sizes, ceiling heights, staging, lighting and group Wi-Fi. The Leisure Tour Operator will be more interested in bedrooms and bathroom configurations, onsite entertainment and leisure facilities. While both may be equally interested in dining and menu options, one will want to see banqueting dining options and facilities while the other will need to see lounge, bar and restaurant options and menu choices. So knowing your Site Inspection audience is important in planning for the visit.

Familiarisation Trips

A Fam Trip could be considered as a series of site inspections, combined in a destination trip itinerary. In this case, Professional Travel Buyers (Tour Operators, Group buyers or Travel agents) or members of the media are invited by a tourism body, tour operator or a group of tourism businesses on an organised trip that is designed to help professional travel buyers learn and experience the destination and its products/experiences first hand as a customer would.

It is usually arranged at no or low cost to the participant (some may pay for their own airfare but largely speaking all land-based arrangements and costs are covered in the Fam). The trip involves a pre-planned scheduled itinerary with a number of visits to a selection of properties, dining and entertainment establishments and day time experiences to showcase what the area has to offer.

It is important not only to understand who your Fam Trip audience are but also to ensure timings are planned and site inspections that form part of the trip all run to schedule. You need to be clear on the time you have available with the Fam Trip group and also what else they are seeing on their itinerary. In this way it allows you to optimise your pitch to them and to present to them the range of other experiences that are available locally to complement your offering without repeating those that are already part of their itinerary.

With travel buyer Fam Trips, the aim is to move the buyer from considering Ireland (or your region) as a destination, to creating business relationships. It is also worth noting that in the course of a group Fam Trip, there may be a number of buyers on the trip that may not necessarily be interested in seeing your property or business, but are eager to see others in the vicinity that also feature on the itinerary. However, they may be required to view your business as part of the group trip, so this places an additional challenge for you to present your experience and offering to those who may be less interested than others.

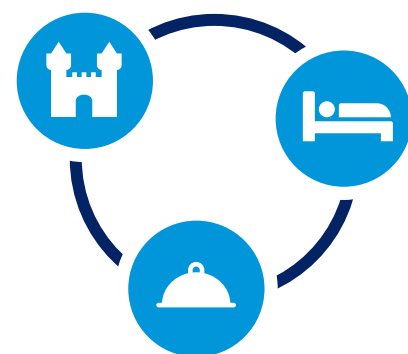
How Site Visits and Fam Trips are planned and hosted

Every year Fáilte Ireland hosts over 1,000 media and an additional 1,500 buyers on a range of Fam Trips. 'Meet In Ireland' host 70 buyers a year on Fams and support a further 100 buyers to participate in DMC originating Fams. 'Meet In Ireland' and 'Dublin Convention Bureau' support 300+ Site Inspections per year.

In addition to this, ITOA member tour operators and in-market tour operators often host their own independent Fam Trips for their retail front line staff or valuable in-market operators and travel agent partners. Some of these may be supported by Fáilte Ireland by way of hosting a dinner or a networking event.

The locations and itinerary plans for these trips are informed by a series of factors including:

- ➔ The profile of the buyers or media coming in and what their customers are looking for (e.g. is it active holidays, multi-generational trips, luxury travel, foodie themed holidays or festival focused media features etc)
- ➔ The wish list of experiences that have requested to feature on the itinerary
- ➔ The locations and strategic priorities of Fáilte Ireland's Business Development Unit in influencing new leisure programme development, and bed night growth targets for Ireland (by balancing regional dispersion of future visitors and tourism revenues)



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- ➔ The source market
- ➔ The time afforded by the buyers for the trip.

How to get involved in Site Visits and Fam Trips

To get help assess your suitability for buyers follow three steps presented below:

STEP 1: CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FÁILTE IRELAND REPRESENTATIVE

Express your interest in getting involved and hosting a Site Visit or Fam Trip if:

- ➔ You believe your product or service is a right fit for traditional channel leisure business by tour operators or travel agents
- ➔ You are willing to invest in developing and contracting with traditional channel leisure buyers
- ➔ You believe you have a compelling offering with a strong USP for international media.

STEP 2: MEET YOUR LOCAL FÁILTE IRELAND CONTACT

Your local Fáilte Ireland contact will then meet you to assess the suitability and quality of your offering for Site Visits and Fam Trips. If your offering is suitable they will then introduce you to the relevant contact in Fáilte Ireland International Media Team, Business Development (Leisure) Team or Business Tourism Team so that you can be considered for the next appropriate opportunity.

STEP 3: PREPARE A B2B FACTSHEET

For buyer Site Visits and Fam Trips you will be required to prepare a B2B factsheet about your offering including:

- ➔ Address/postcode and GPS details
- ➔ Description of your offering and who it is suitable for – be it FIT or Group
- ➔ Any fitness or mobility requirements or age restrictions required within your offering
- ➔ Information such as opening days, times, seasonality
- ➔ Distance from nearest accommodation hubs and nearby experiences
- ➔ Whether or not you are serviced by public transport
- ➔ Confirmation you are willing to offer B2B rates for group and/or FIT
- ➔ Contact details for specific booking contact person
- ➔ Minimum and maximum numbers
- ➔ Any ancillary services on-site (if you are not an accommodation provider) such as toilets, café, retail outlet etc.

Depending on your level of experience and in-house sales staff expertise in international sales, you may also be recommended for some sales training workshops/webinars.



The 20 most common mistakes in delivering Site Visits and Fam Trips

Over the years there have been valuable insights gained and lessons learned about how to make the most of Site Visits and Fam Trips. The most common mistakes that need to be avoided to ensure success and safeguard reputational damage not just for your business but for Ireland's reputation as a destination are outlined here.

1. FAILING TO ADEQUATELY RESEARCH YOUR SITE VISIT/FAM TRIP AUDIENCE

If you are approached to participate in a Fam you need to find out the following information to best prepare for success:

Are they a buyer group or media and what market(s) are they from?

- ➔ Who are they and what do they currently programme?
- ➔ Do they service FIT and/or Group business? (so how do I need to present my offering if I service both)
- ➔ If media, what publications do they write for? (How do they write, what are they likely to focus on, what is the purpose/theme of the article/feature they are writing about and how can my business add to their story)
- ➔ What are the aspects of my product/service or property that will be most important for them to see?

What size group is visiting?

- ➔ Will I need to split them up to optimise the efficiency of the show around?
- ➔ What colleagues are available to help me?

What day and time are they coming and how much time do I have with them to showcase my product or experience?

- ➔ Is the Owner/General Manager available to 'meet and greet'? Make sure to book it into their calendar as a VIP event and arrange to brief them in detail about who they are
- ➔ Be aware of other business booked/confirmed at this time and how will this be managed
- ➔ Who are the most appropriate staff and what skills do I need to have on duty on the day?
- ➔ Do we have time to offer refreshments/lunch? Discuss with the chef what can be offered and discuss with the visit organiser what they are having in other venues so that there is no duplication
- ➔ How do we best profile a sample of our experience showcasing the range of activities or packages we offer in the time allowed while affording them time to inspect the product/property?
- ➔ Is it appropriate to showcase a sample of our entertainment programme (if relevant)?
- ➔ What is the weather forecast and how do I manage the visit so weather is not an inhibitor to showcasing the product at its best?



2. FAILING TO CONSIDER AND KEEP TO THE TIMINGS AFFORDED TO YOU

A show around that runs overtime presents a negative view of your business. You need to demonstrate confidence to a buyer, particularly for group tours, that you can manage time effectively with their groups. Likewise you don't want to cause scheduling challenges to the Site Visit/Fam Trip organiser which could impact on the next time visits are being organised.

You need to consider the following:

- ➔ What is feasible and most important to the audience?
- ➔ What is the most logical and optimally visually appealing route/locations to use or experiences to have in the time slot you have been scheduled to have the group for?

3. FAILING TO CONSIDER THE LOGISTICS AND QUALITY OF SHOW AROUNDS FOR LARGER GROUPS

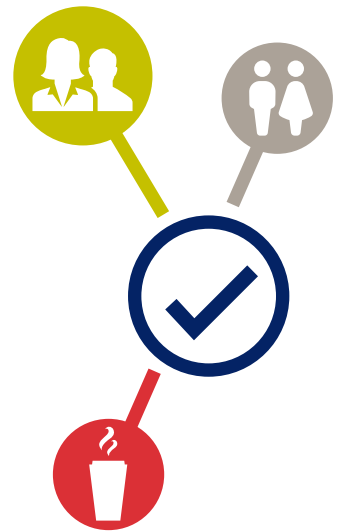
It is recommended if numbers are greater than about six that you break up the group. It is not really comfortable or possible to properly inspect a bedroom for example if any more than about six people are trying to view it at a time. Likewise in the case of experiences, smaller group sampling can be more efficient on the time available and can allow for more detailed handling of buyer/media questions.

4. FAILING TO BE FLEXIBLE IN RESPONDING TO SHORT NOTICE OF CHANGES

Despite an organiser's best efforts there are invariably instances where timings do not run according to schedule. Remember they are trying to co-ordinate about 4 to 6 different visits in one day and also have to allow for unforeseen traffic delays or personal/health emergencies of a participant.

Your business needs to be able to demonstrate flexibility to cope with this, in a way that does not compromise the quality of the visit, even if you have to reduce the breadth of what you showcase in the time afforded. It is important to demonstrate you are able to react quickly to having to change arrival time, shorten the time/show around route and experience sampling or refreshment options, if necessary.

Examples of this may include offering refreshments to go, abbreviating your show around and agreeing to send them on a video and photo album of your facilities to complement the areas they did not have time to see or handling buyer questions collectively over their refreshment time instead of individually throughout the show around. Equally, if you are offering experience sampling and you have some participants who do not want/or are unable for some reason to test the product, you need to have a backup plan for engaging them in something else or having someone available to offer them more detailed product information while the others are sampling. It is important they don't feel neglected. It is also worth considering alternative arrangements for the group if the experience is weather dependent and the weather is not favourable on the day.





5. FAILING TO PROPERLY BRIEF ALL STAFF ABOUT THE VISIT

Briefing frontline colleagues about Site Visits and Fam Trips is vital. Making sure everyone is well presented and in full uniform on the day is critical. The more involved and aware the team is, the more they can support the delivery of an exceptional site inspection. Acknowledging team members and (where appropriate) introduce them during a show around also gives buyers a feel for how the team works together to service their customers and also says a lot about the ethos of the business.

6. FAILING TO HAVE A SENIOR TEAM MEMBER MEET AND GREET THE GROUP

Buyers continually feedback to Fáilte Ireland that one of the most impressive elements of a Site Visit of Fam Trip in a destination like Ireland (where there are so many businesses owner-operated or independently managed and marketed) is the opportunity to meet and be greeted by the owner and/or most senior manager. The buyers say that this is indicative of how important you consider their business and their clients to be and how well you personalise their experience and value and take care of their customers. They firmly believe that it speaks volumes as to the ethos of your business.

7. FAILING TO ASK THE GROUP/AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

This is a valuable opportunity to get further insights about these buyers or media and what is most important to them or their clients so you can tailor your sales pitch accordingly and stress the product benefits that you know will most resonate with them and their customer audience. It is recommended that you begin engaging in this as soon as possible on their arrival and maintain some questions throughout the visit, so that you continue to demonstrate your interest in them and their business. It can also give you a sense of their interest levels in your business, if they are lethargic and if there are language barriers for anyone in the group.

8. FAILING TO CONSIDER THE NEED FOR RESTROOM/TOILET FACILITIES AND REFRESHMENTS

While this may not feature within the proposed itinerary, it is important to suggest and allow time for restroom needs. Your audience may have been travelling between locations for a long period of time. Likewise, consider the need for refreshments and agree what the nature of these can be with the organiser in advance. For example, if it is appropriate to offer morning coffee/scones or afternoon tea, or is a light lunch appropriate? If so, check what they are having for lunch on other days, so you don't repeat the menu or ingredients and also check if there are any special dietary requirements. If time does not allow for a refreshment break, perhaps you can offer a light snack to go, be that a water and some fruit or coffee/tea to go and some bite size pastries/cake or if you are a food producer, a tasting of your product to go for sampling later.



9. FAILING TO HAVE A SHORT, CONCISE SALES PITCH WITH APPROPRIATE B2B FACTSHEET/SALES COLLATERAL SUPPORT

So often it is noted by buyers, that there are inconsistencies in the approach, detail and language presented in a sales pitch and supporting materials are often not considered B2B appropriate. It is important to agree with all of the team involved in show rounds a list of features and benefits – sales points that should be delivered depending on the media/buyer type you are meeting. It is also important that these are delivered in clear and concise plain English. Therefore if the buyer is tired, or has limited English language capability, it is easier for them to be able to recall the most important aspects of your business for their clients.

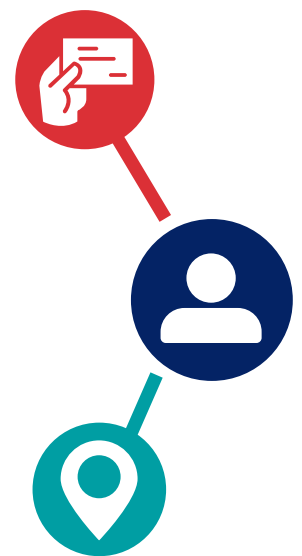
A simple compelling 'human' story for example is a great way to assist the buyer recall information more easily, perhaps about the history/ownership of the business. Equally noting to buyers 2 or 3 things your international clients 'most like' or 'positively comment on', or if you have made upgrades or improvements in response to customer feedback. This offers a refreshing way to present the business features and benefits to visitors, as it comes across as past customer testimonials rather than your hard sales pitch and also suggests to buyers that you welcome and value customer feedback.

A great way to approach the sales pitch is to consider, if these buyers were only able to recall 2 or 3 things about my business what would I want that to be and focus on these in your summary recap at the end of the show around. Before you thank them for their visit, clarify if they have any further questions and invite feedback. Another valuable tip is to have staff present show rounds to each other (assuming the role of different buyer types/profiles). This can be done as part of your in-house training or staff meetings to score and give peer to peer feedback, as this is a very impactful way of learning and assists recall while ensuring greater consistency in delivery and messaging your sales pitch. It is important to strike a balance between professional and friendly in your tone and approach: the professional tone reassures the visitor, while the friendly tone, particularly on arrival, creates a connection.

All buyers should be offered professionally designed buyer's fact sheet or brochure (not bulky) about your business detailing the range of B2B offerings you have. This should differ from a typical consumer brochure, as the facts about your product or experience that buyers will need to know differs from the information needed by a consumer. *See separate resource, B2B Factsheet, for more information on designing effective B2B sales collateral.* A simple A4 front and back factsheet card is probably the most relevant type of B2B collateral to a buyer while options for additional materials and high resolution images can be offered to follow in soft copy or by way of a branded USB to take away. Suggestions on a Media Press Kit Pack are detailed later in this resource.

10. FAILING TO ASK FOR THEIR BUSINESS

Failing to ask for their business and omitting to request business cards and permission to contact them is more commonplace than you think and is a key flaw in a Site Visit or Fam Trip. Be sure they leave with your business card and contact details so you can monitor enquiries directly and monitor return on investment on the Fam over time.



11. FAILING TO PRESENT YOUR AREA/GEOGRAPHY OR DESTINATION IN YOUR SALES PITCH

Unless you are an iconic experience (a must see bucket list experience), it takes more than a single product or experience offering to convince a buyer to have their customer travel to you/stay with you. Noting other experiences available nearby or your proximity and accessibility to key urban hubs or airports, can demonstrate most effectively to buyers how beneficial your location is to a programme or itinerary that they may use.

12. REFERENCING INAPPROPRIATE CUSTOMER PROFILES OR AUDIENCES IN YOUR SALES PITCH

A common mistake that buyers have provided as feedback is that it is very off-putting for them in sales pitches and show arounds when sales staff reference their experience and positive feedback from other customer types that might not marry well with the buyer's client profiles.

For example, if you mention how popular a feature of your offering is with school tours and you are talking to a buyer who programmes discerning Frequent Independent Traveller (FIT) cultural trips, they may be put off in booking with you, if they feel their clients will have to negotiate the experience with groups of noisy school tour groups.

Likewise, mentioning how popular certain room types or facilities are with your wedding guests if you are selling to a buyer whose clients are FIT culturally curious, may also be off-putting if they feel your business will be more focused on the big wedding which could take over the lounge and relaxation space. It is important to put yourself in the buyer's shoes, and be very aware of their customer audience.

13. FAILING TO CONSIDER OR RECOGNISE LANGUAGE BARRIERS OR LETHARGY OF YOUR AUDIENCE

By engaging with your audience as soon as they arrive and asking polite conversations questions like how their day has been, where they have already been, highlights of the trip so far and so on, can give you a clear sense of the level of English ability of your international audience and if they are tired or somewhat disengaged possibly due to the length of their day. Remember Fam Trips are educational programmes, they have jam-packed itineraries with early starts and late evenings.

14. FAILING TO INSPECT THE ROUTE BEFOREHAND AND HAVING STAFF ON HAND TO ADDRESS ISSUES THAT MIGHT ARISE

Walking the planned inspection route a day or two before (to allow time to address maintenance needs) and again on the day, shortly before the expected arrival of the party, is important. This ensures it is clean, tidy, well presented, and free of congestion/deliveries and that no obvious maintenance is required. Visibility of staff offices and front desks, should ensure an orderly uncluttered and well maintained office setting. So often on arrival to a business, details like the following can be seen:

- ➔ Spent matches
- ➔ Dusty skirting boards and railings; overhead cobwebs
- ➔ Chipped paint, damaged furniture

- ➔ Dirty highchairs and matting
- ➔ Broken blinds, missing curtain hooks, broken door handles
- ➔ Spent lightbulbs
- ➔ Cigarette butts at entrances
- ➔ Uncleared glasses/ashtrays
- ➔ Unemptied or dirty bins
- ➔ Broken/weathered signage
- ➔ Dirty windows or mirrors
- ➔ Sellotape and sticker residues left on doorways
- ➔ Equipment poorly stored or blocking walking ways.

15. FAILING TO HAVE PROFICIENT SALES STAFF/SALES TRAINING

Some buyers comment on the lack of proficiency and skills of junior sales staff on Site Visits and Fam Trip show arounds. Equally, other buyers have also commented that senior sales and frontline operational staff need to appear enthused and motivated to win new business and that this often does not come across in their demeanour and tone. If you feel your team could benefit from some skills development or refresher training in this area, please contact the Enterprise Development Team at Fáilte Ireland to enquire about workshops and programmes available to support your business in this regard.

16. FAILING TO OFFER APPROPRIATE GIFTS

There are no hard and fast rules about whether or not gifting to buyers on Fams is necessary. As a rule of thumb, it is not expected by buyers, but is usually welcomed and considered a gesture to thank them for their visit. However, some practical tips should be applied.

- ➔ Ideally, the gift should relate to your business or reflect your business brand if possible (by branding it, it assists recall)
- ➔ Avoid gifts that carry 'Made in China' type communications on the base or in their packaging, it should not appear like a cheap souvenir
- ➔ The best advice is to offer something practical and useful, not bulky, heavy or expensive. If you put yourself in the buyer or journalist shoes, they travel so extensively that practical travel-related gifts are useful like portable chargers, business card pouches, phone wallet holders, travel adapters for electronics, a small scented candle/scented oil diffuser, a locally crafted hand lotion, branded spa product or scented drawer sachets, practical stationary items or office desk items or a signed photo of a landscape location beside/near your business that can be framed in a light material or added to a frame when they return home.
- ➔ If offering liquids ensure they are smaller than 100ml allowed for carry-on luggage.

17. FAILING TO FOLLOW UP

If the Site Visit of Fam Trip is organised by a tourism body or tour operator, the contact details of each person visiting should be recorded by them. You should request contact details from them so that you can follow up with individuals. The follow-up should continue in the professional and friendly tone set during the site inspection and provide helpful additional information such as relevant imagery, rates and availability or new product/facilities news relevant to their client profiles, on the business and the area.

It is also worth checking if they are attending future in-market events you may be travelling to so you can try and plan some one-to-one face time with them to further progress your efforts to convert the sale. If you have placed a number of follow up communications to the buyer and have received no acknowledgement or response, and no sign of sales opportunities being forthcoming inside of a year, it might be worth reaching out to them to see if there is any further information you can offer or if they would prefer you to cease contact, if your business is not of interest to them. This shows a maturity and respect for their time and not wanting to add to the volume of unnecessary communications they receive.

18. FAILING TO REQUEST FEEDBACK/LACK OF DEBRIEF/REVIEW

It is always worthwhile to sit with the wider team who engaged with the Site Visit or Fam Trip to share insights from the group, discuss what went well and how you could improve for the next time. Asking the co-coordinator who travelled with the group for their observations and feedback (and any buyer feedback or insights shared by the group afterwards) is also invaluable and allows you consider ways you can improve, while affording you an opportunity to thank them personally for their role in giving you the opportunity to participate in the Site Visit or Fam Trip.

19. FAILING TO PROMPTLY RESPOND TO SALES ENQUIRIES

It is important that all enquiries for business are responded to within one working day, if not sooner.

20. FAILING TO REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Be sure to celebrate with your team when the first enquiry is received. It means you collectively did a good job and always remember to express thanks for the enquiry when the business converts.

TOP TIP: Media/Press Kit – What to include?

A media kit is a pre-prepared set of materials that is distributed to the media for promotional use. It can be either in hard copy or electronic format (or downloadable from a media section on your website), and should include:

- ➔ Fact sheets about your business and products and media contact information
- ➔ A short background on your company's history and key personnel (if relevant)
- ➔ Samples of recent press releases
- ➔ Details of recent awards
- ➔ Current brochures
- ➔ High-resolution images (USB or downloadable) of products, company logo, key executives.