

# Buying Local

## What is buying local?

**Buying local is the purchase of locally made products and services from your local area. It includes encouraging and offering opportunities for your guests to buy local as well.**

Sourcing products and services locally not only benefits the people living in destination, it can benefit your business too. Although it can seem like a huge challenge for 'mainstream' business, there are many small changes you can make that improve quality at no extra cost.

A growing number of guests are expecting more out of their holiday. Authentic crafts, fresh local food, hand-made table linen can help you create a distinct accommodation - and differentiate and add value to your brand. And encouraging guests to experience the rich local culture, traditional crafts, festivals, as well as local food and drink, will give them an experience they simply won't forget.

Sourcing locally can improve your reputation locally and further afield... you can promote your commitment to guests and tour operators to enhance your public image and help secure contracts and bookings in this age of 'greener' tourism. And, of course, it will also help you work towards green certification.

**Giving a fair deal to locals through the purchase of products and services helps create a more successful brand for your business and the destination you operate in - enabling you to compete successfully in the future.**

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## 1. Getting Started – a general guide

### Top Tips:

**Create a champion** Make someone responsible for identifying opportunities and mentoring new suppliers within Purchasing. Make sure they understand the benefits to business, as well as the destination they are working in. Include measurement of these responsibilities within your performance measurement and reward systems (link strong performance to pay and think about setting up a regular Award for staff – even a small prize like a box of chocolates can really help engage staff).

**Prioritise** Review current supply chains and plan which local products to introduce according to company strategy and market segment - consider feasibility, cost and potential for a quick win. You should be able to find local goods for the same or even lower cost. Your review might reveal you're already doing well in this area, but look for ways to expand and improve.

**Think creatively** Rather than repeat past procurement: if new uniforms are needed, could local design and production be used? If new buildings are being added, could local carvings or art be used for decoration?

The potential is almost endless ... think soft furnishings and interiors (art, crafts, table mats, table linen, candles), guest amenities (recycled paper, handmade soaps), operational supplies (uniforms, bed linen), services (floristry, entertainment) and of course food products – what could be better than eating fresh local produce and authentic foods when you're away! You can also work with smaller suppliers to create bespoke items to give your hotel a truly authentic feel or offer unique products to visitors. A growing number of guests are looking for a more differentiated product. A growing number of customers are seeking out these kinds of experiences.

**Change contract specifications** Consider creating a number of smaller contracts on a scale that local suppliers can handle. This spreads benefits and risks. It can allow small businesses to build their capacity and grow their business.

**Change the payment period** Smaller businesses really need to be paid promptly, so make sure you pay within a reasonable timescale and ideally within 15 days.

The next 6 sections give you guidance in key areas - including how to effectively engage staff and make the changes needed in your business.

You can find out more about all of the case studies featured in this section by visiting [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk) and clicking on 'projects'.

## 2. Buying local food – building links with farmers

### The Opportunity:

Fantastic local produce really does add to the experience for guests – and many visitors are already demanding local food at home, so they understand all of the benefits. You can create authentic menus or theme nights to add a distinct flavour to your guest's holiday. It can really help differentiate your accommodation.

Local produce can also be fresher and better value with lower transport costs. Reducing the amount of food you import or get transported over long distances, also means reducing carbon emissions.

All of this offers a great message about your business ... for tour operators who have a growing need to work with more sustainable suppliers – and for your guests.

### Top Tips:

**Find out if there is a local initiative already underway that you can get involved in.** Talk to your local tourist board, or tourism contact in local government to see if they can help put you in touch with an existing initiative to link farmers and accommodations.

**Encourage chefs and food & beverage managers to try local food and adapt their purchasing practices and recipes.**

**Add value for your customers** Provide information on the food and promote the fact that you support local farmers – it's a great message! You could also do cookery demonstrations or classes using traditional recipes - and give recipe cards to guests to take home. A great way for them to remember their visit. You can use local food to create a unique experience for customers.

**Encourage local suppliers to create new recipes and value-added food products.** Let them know what you want and work with them to develop ideas.

**Plan for seasonality of produce and offer seasonal recipes in your restaurant/s.** Seasonal produce always tastes better.

**Help farmers understand your needs**, so they can deliver the best service to you. Give advice on quality, packaging and health and safety.

### **CASE STUDY: Reaping the benefit of fresh and distinctive local food**

*In Mexico, the Sensatori resort in Cancun is serving local 'jungle jams' made by a group of Mayan women. Not only is it giving the customers a real taste of Mexico, the chefs are enjoying incorporating local produce into their menus....and a local community is benefitting with income from tourism.*

*A guest survey revealed the majority of guests would mostly rather eat 'jungle jams' in favour of imported goods, with one guest commenting 'a nice unique touch – it added character to our holiday, thanks!'.*

### 3. Encouraging guests to explore

#### The Opportunity

Most destinations have more to offer holidaymakers than sun, sand and sea. Sustainable tours and excursions can give guests a range of unique opportunities to get closer to the country they've come to visit. And make their holiday with you truly memorable.

Your role is to make sure guests get the opportunity to have a richer holiday experience by encouraging them to get out and about – and offering help for them to do so. Don't forget, these trips get visitors out spending money in the local economy, making sure that people living in the destination can make a decent living out of the tourism to their home – without resorting to hassling visitors! And guests get a memorable holiday ... everyone wins.

#### Top Tips:

**Find out about local opportunities to give guests a real flavour of your destination and feature the information in reception – you can work with tour operators and local licensed guides.** Just think what a difference it would make if guests could visit local producers - vineyards, olive groves as well as farms and craft-making – and take trips to traditional villages and cultural or heritage sites. Opportunities to meet and talk to local people are often the thing that makes their visit really special. Families often consider such excursions an excellent way to educate their children on culture, heritage and the natural environment – in a fun way! It can give you a real competitive edge with this market.

**Provide maps and walking tour information so guests have the confidence to explore.**

**Have bicycles available.** They really do encourage guests to get out and about.

**Offer a minibus service to local villages, towns or craft centres** – or work with a local taxi service.

**Provide bus timetables**, so guests can use public transport where possible – it really does get them closer to local people and make for a real holiday adventure.

**Offer green holiday tips to guests**, so they know how they can make a positive difference whilst they are out and about. You can gain access to tips by visiting [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk) and clicking on 'green business tools' and then 'communication tools'.

#### **CASE STUDY: Fairer Excursions in Kenya**

*In the Maasai Mara, Kenya, The Travel Foundation worked with Tribal Voice Communications to ensure that Maasai tribes earned a fair income from the tours that came to their villages. Driver guides often pocketed the entrance fees, but after a new fair ticketing system was introduced, the villagers income increased by 800%!*

#### 4. Encouraging guests to buy local

##### The Opportunity

In an increasingly competitive ‘sun, sand and sea’ marketplace, it’s important to offer guests products and services that are distinct to the local area – local activities enrich the destination experience leading to more recommendations, repeat business and an enhanced destination image.

Shopping is a vital component of any holiday, but tourists do want to buy products that are meaningful to their destination. Goods imported from another country (or even continent!) call in to question the authenticity and quality of the destination and the competitive edge is lost. Getting out and about and buying local is actually great fun for holidaymakers! And of course it also helps people living in the local area make a fair living from tourism.

##### Top Tips:

**Provide information to guests** Work with your tour operators to include information on buying local crafts and other products or services within welcome packs and briefings, along with guidelines for pricing and advice on appropriate haggling. If your hotel is decorated with local crafts, paintings etc, provide information on the producer and where guests can buy the items from. Also offer maps, so that tourists can easily find their way around the area, as well as information on public transport.

**All inclusive hotels could consider offering a ‘paid for voucher scheme’** whereby guests could enjoy a meal at a local restaurant once a week, saving on the operational costs of the hotel restaurant for one night. This can really help boost the revenue of local businesses, as well as offer your customers something a bit different.

**Offer retail space to local craftspeople** for example, through a weekly craft fair and advertising space to local taxis, excursions or guides.

**Provide business advice and support to local entrepreneurs** Your contacts, market networks and understanding of guests’ needs could be invaluable and helping in this way can enhance your reputation locally and further afield. You could even work with local suppliers to support new product development with, for example, a workshop on understanding customer needs – helping to give guests just what they want.

**Support destination-wide initiatives** Such as festivals and development of a local brand. Festivals can bring tourists in to the destination in low season and encourage visitors out in to the local community. You can find out more about this in section 6.

**Offer green holiday tips to guests**, so they know how they can make a positive difference to the destination whilst they are out and about. You can gain access to tips by visiting [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk) and clicking on ‘green business tools’ and then ‘communication tools’.

##### **CASE STUDY: Working with beach operators in Sri Lanka**

*In Sri Lanka, the Travel Foundation has been working with beach operators by offering customer service training courses so that they can provide quality tours and services for tourists...and holidaymakers get to experience a fantastic day out!*

*The beach operators work with specific hotels to offer their guests tours of the local area.*

## 5. Building a unique destination

### The Opportunity

You can help differentiate your destination by getting involved with individuals and community groups locally – creating a distinct destination is great for business! When competition is intense, it's important to work together to build a distinct brand for your destination. Holidaymakers are increasingly after more than just sun, sea and sand and concern for all things 'green' is growing – so find out if there is a sustainable 'community tourism partnership' locally that you can get involved in, or if you can help to set one up.

Working in partnership with other stakeholders to make your destination greener is the key to creating a highly successful destination brand. It helps develop a truly welcoming environment and removes hassle for visitors – as locals have opportunities and don't need to resort to begging or hawking in order to make a reasonable living. It also gives visitors a more memorable experience through distinct products and services – helping to make your destination truly unique ... and secure your business in to the future.

### Top Tips:

**Approach your local tourism board or tourism contact in local government if you're not sure where to start**, as they should be able to help identify needs and opportunities, support work and put people in contact to create effective partnerships.

**Find out if there is a local 'community tourism partnership'** See if you can get involved in an existing 'tourism partnership' that involves a wide range of stakeholders, or help to get a group off the ground. Identify the key issues and the opportunities together and then decide on the priorities for change. Maybe start with some quick wins, to get everyone inspired! Make sure there is a strong focus on economic benefits for residents, but include environmental, social and cultural themes as appropriate. Remember that local people could well have non-financial goals as well; such as training, access to infrastructure or natural resources and ability to participate in decisions.

**Help to keep things going** Remember that partnerships can fall apart when expectations are high and progress slow. Once you've started work, make sure you discuss this and ways to manage everyone's expectations. As above, have some quick wins, as well as longer-term goals.

**Do your bit to find appropriate ways to share risks and benefits across all partners** Make sure the less advantaged understand their risks and are not over-exposed.

**Have frank and open discussions about any commission system and fees** Explore how everyone can benefit from a bigger opportunity, rather than fighting for shares in the current opportunity. Agree any new rules as a group and review to make sure things are working smoothly.

**Communicate!** Good communications can keep everyone on track and enthusiastic, so make sure someone takes responsibility to getting the latest news out and keeping everyone informed.

**Remember...** *Finding the right people to work with is key. Understand local social structures and include those leaders and social entrepreneurs who get things done locally. Bring in a facilitator to help if necessary.*

*In Cyprus, a ground breaking destination partnership has been signed between Travel Foundation, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation and the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative to work collaboratively over the next 5 years to green Cyprus!*

## 6. Managing change within your business

### The Opportunity

Making the most of local supply chain opportunity will mean doing things a bit differently and is likely to involve change management within the business. This change needs to be properly planned and managed.

Many hotels have great ideas about the opportunities to create a more distinct holiday for their guests, but these can go wrong when implementing. Effectively managing change internally will make the difference between a nice idea and real impact!

### Top Tips:

**Assess the business case for your accommodation** What are your long-term aims or priorities (eg consolidation, rebranding, increasing visitor spend or length of stay, cost cutting, improving the local environment etc) and how could local linkages help you achieve these? It doesn't matter if you are a small independent or a large chain, you can transform your business with a greater focus on sustainable tourism.

**Build top management support** Otherwise when a linkage requires a change in how business is done, it will stall. Make sure managers understand all of the benefits great local supply can deliver to the business to ensure their commitment to the change.

**Appoint a champion within your accommodation**, with resources and a mandate to create change. This can be part of a manager's job, but it needs to be someone with the authority to call on staff in different departments to implement new linkages.

**Look at how you can do business differently** in order to deliver commercial goals and boost local economic benefit. Consider the full range of local linkage opportunities, from procurement to taking part in community tourism partnerships. Be innovative; think laterally and be open to new ways of doing business – encourage a new mindset among colleagues.

**Ensure new linkages become part of the normal daily operational practice and staff routine.** For example, a new local supply of table linen may be sourced initially by the champion, but needs to then become part of the purchasing process, so that it continues in to the future.

**Make sure you market local products well** Make the most of the opportunity by making a feature of local products or services and provide information to guests. It will really add to their holiday experience!

**Communicate!** Great staff and guest communications can keep everyone on track and enthusiastic, so make sure your champion takes responsibility for getting the latest news out and keeping everyone informed. Look for ways for everyone to get involved and do their bit – it will really give your 'green' focus the edge!