

## TTG Top 50 Travel Agencies 2021: Ocean Cruise Agency assessment form

**Congratulations on being shortlisted as one of the UK's top five ocean cruise agencies! We know the last 12 months have been like nothing the travel industry has ever seen. We have created a new TTG Top 50 assessment form that asks different questions, and will help you tell the story of how you and your team have survived and adapted, and provided the very best care to your customers, under such difficult circumstances. This will be key to TTG using the Top 50 programme to demonstrate to consumers exactly why they should book with a travel agent in future. Please read these new questions carefully, complete the form (bulletpoints is fine) and send the form back to your journalist judge in advance of your Zoom call, for further discussion.**



### **Background info:**

Tell us a little bit about your business, how long you've been operation, the size of your team, etc.

Tell us a little about your ocean cruise sales (in a normal year!). What proportion of business does ocean cruise normally make up for you? What sort of cruises do you sell most of and who are your closest supplier partners?

Please list the names and job titles of any of your team taking part in the interview:

### **1. How your team has coped – worth up to 5 marks**

**Tell us how you and your team have coped with the extraordinary challenges thrown at the industry this year. Please don't be concerned about having had to lose staff and reduce hours and so on. Everyone's in the same boat! You might consider telling us:**

- What changes were you forced to make to your team last year and since?
- How did your team operate during the height of the crisis and since? How did you adapt working practises?
- How did you continue to offer support to your team members?
- How did your team pull together?
- How big an impact did it have on your team's mental health and how did you try to safeguard their mental health?
- How did you make sure the team was/is up-to-date with updates on restrictions and rules relating to travel during the crisis?

### **2. How you looked after your customers - worth up to 10 marks**

**Travel agents have demonstrated their value like never before during the Covid crisis. Tell us what exactly you had to do for your customers, and how you and your team strived to go above and beyond. You might consider:**

- How have you handled the coronavirus crisis from a customer perspective, particularly for ocean cruise holidays?

- How many customers have you had to sort refunds, repatriations etc for? What amount of administration/overtime has been required?
- Any particular client stories/cases that stand out, such as a customer you fought particularly hard to get a refund for or a client who's return home was a huge challenge? Any ways in which you had to go above and beyond for your customers?
- What level of reassurance and communication was required with customers who travelled during the crisis or were looking to book for future travel?
- Did you begin communicating in new ways eg Zoom calls?
- What sort of feedback and appreciation did you get from customers? Share testimonials/reviews if you can.
- If you have a store, how and when did you reopen it and how did you make it Covid-secure and help customers to feel safe when visiting you?

### **3. About your previous business performance, and your marketing plans - worth up to 5 marks**

**We'll want to hear how business started off in 2020 and how you have continued to keep in touch with your clients during these challenging times.**

- How were your ocean cruise sales faring in Q1 2020 (Jan-Mar) before the pandemic hit? Can you give us any figures and comparison with 2019? What plans and aspirations did you have for the year ahead?
- What approach did you take with marketing ocean cruise holidays during the height of the crisis and since, including social media channels, your email newsletters, website, any virtual events for clients etc?
- How and when did you start proactively promoting ocean cruise holidays again and with what success?
- Have you come up with any new ways to communicate or promote your ocean cruise business?
- How have you been talking about the value of booking ocean cruise holidays with a travel agent?
- Have you gained any new ocean cruise clients as a result of bad customer experiences with other providers during the pandemic?
- How have ocean cruise sales fared in more recent months? Any positives you can share?

### **Optional section: Final thoughts...**

**Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experience of the past year? This section is optional! But you might consider:**

- Any ways you or your team helped out in the local community, volunteering etc?
- Anything you/your team has learnt as a result of the crisis, and ways in which you might come back stronger?
- Any other tales of flying in the face of adversity in the last 12 months?

