

Wow 2016: Wonderful Outdoors Wallonia

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Erasmus+

Tourism Angles



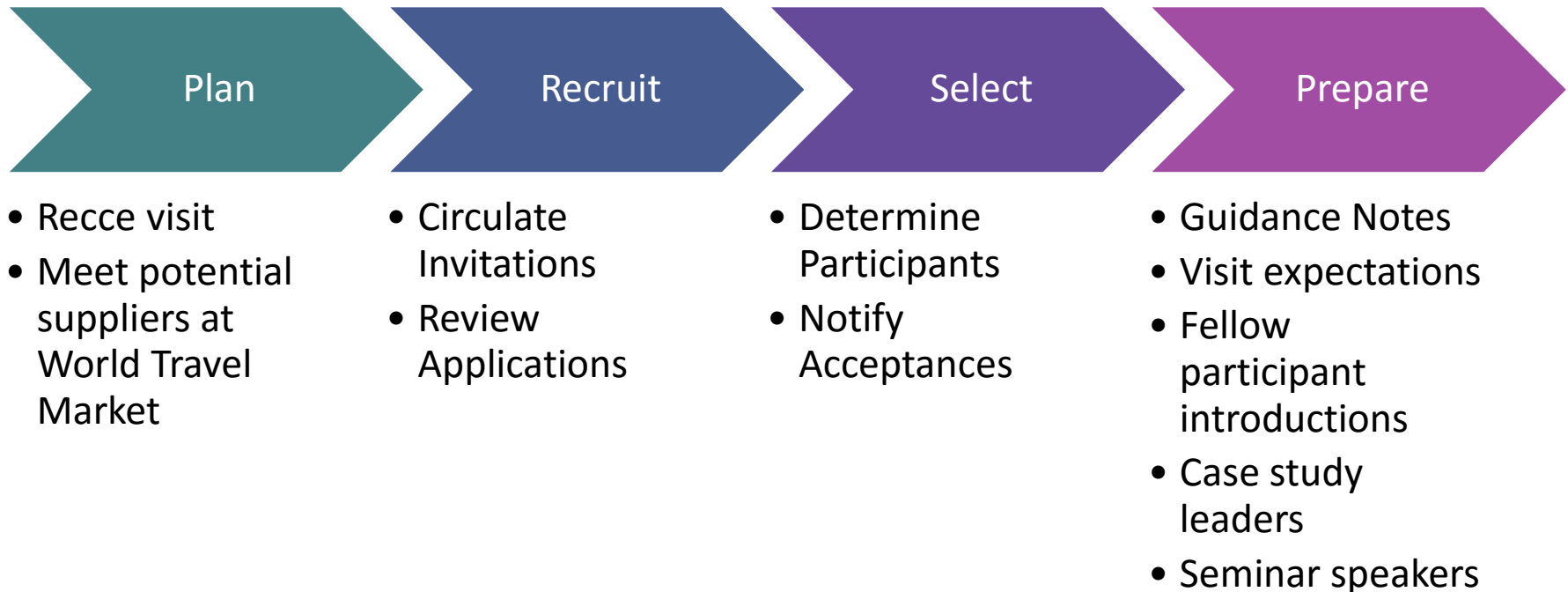
Purpose

In May 2016, a group of 18 tourism professionals experienced the outdoor activity tourism offer of Belgium's Wallonia region. Over the seven day study visit we met local tourism professionals, small business owners, event, attraction and outdoor activity providers.

We discovered innovations, shared successes and lessons learnt in developing and operating tourism businesses. As a direct result we grew our skills, understanding and professional networks, to implement and disseminate back in the UK .

Wow was part-financed through an Erasmus+ education and training grant.

Pre-visit



Day 1: Sunday 08 May

Participants travelled from UK to Belgium - 10 from Scotland flying from Edinburgh and 8 from England and Wales travelling via Eurostar

After joining together in Brussels we journey by coach to first stop Tournai – accompanied by Host Partner CATPW rep Katja Onstenk

Case study briefing session identifying group members



Day 2: Monday 09 May

Presentations

- Chemins du Rail
- Year of the Bike Wallonia 2016
- Welcome Velo

Visits

- Tournai Info Centre
- Cycle tour
- Junction Point signposting

Case study briefing



Day 3: Tuesday 10 May

Presentation: Youth Hostel Network and educational groups - Caroline Raedemaeker

Presentation: Hainaut Rando - Antoine Genart

Presentation: Online walking trail promotion - CATPW

Activity: Wallonia's Virtual Reality Experience – CATPW Katja Onstenk

Activity: Sity Tour Walking App developed by Champlon Youth Hostel

Case Study groups



Day 4: Wednesday 11 May

Seminar Programme – Lake of Eau d'heure

- Welcome – Catherine Saey / Jackie Ellis
- Presentation 1: Receptive Tourism and Oufti concept – Corinne Grenier
- Presentation 2: TallyHo cycles and the Tweed Ride – Jack Harris
- Presentation 3: Bike marketing + Vennbahn in East Belgium – Dany Heck
- Panel Q & A
- Presentation 4: Loch Lomond Cruises Development – Stuart Cordner
- Presentation 5: Namur and SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELLA – Monique Arends
- Presentation 6: Digital & Social Media marketing– Andrew Lloyd Hughes
- Panel Q & A

Day 4: Wednesday 11 May

Lake of Eau d'heure
seminar and activities



Day 5: Thursday 12 May

Case study groups

Presentation: Faläen guided tour and concept “The Most Beautiful Villages in Wallonia”

Activity: Rail bikes and walk to the Abbaye of Maredsous

Activity: Dinant Evasion

Visit: Restaurant Couvent de Bethléem La Merveilleuse and museum



Day 6: Friday 13 May

Visit: Nivelles

- Church tours and events
- Traditional foods

Visit: Waterloo battlefield

- Planning for the 2015 bicentenary events
- Visitor facilities and experience product development

Brussels



Day 7: Saturday 14 May

- Study visit end – just time to complete some mystery shopper questionnaires before returning to the UK



2016 Wow group photo – participants and hosts

Direct Outputs

- 18 participants
- 18 visits
- 7 activities
- 3 Case Studies
- 60 mystery shopper assessments



Feedback

Training & Mentoring opportunities delivered by participants since return

Occasions = 35

No of People reached = 285

Follow-on Outputs

- Asked to deliver a presentation to my colleagues around cycling development and infrastructure.
- Debriefed our onsite work team (4 people) on ideas to ensure our site is bike friendly and ways to roll out ideas.
- Held meeting with the Outdoor Activity company (staff of 16) to discuss findings on the Belgian outdoor activity sector.
- Video created shared on YouTube
- Coordinated a complex bid to the Discover England Fund
- This trip helped me with my confidence by meeting others with a similar portfolio of projects.
- Coming from a technical sports background this has given me confidence to strip back some products and rebuild and offer to a less technical (so more inclusive) tourism market

Resulting business improvements

- I'm in the process of creating a bike hire element of my business and looking at implementing a hamper service with guided trips.
- The practical examples of using activity-based events and experiences for corporate development sessions I found most interesting and is something I want to explore further in my own destination.
- Repackaging our 'taster sessions' into more family friendly 'tours' or safaris.
- We created an interactive map on our website using technology learned in Belgium. We also added on links to travel by bike and foot on our interactive maps to encourage outdoor activity.

Feedback

Likelihood to recommend similar Erasmus+ training opportunities in future

Extremely likely = 80%

Very likely = 6.67%

Somewhat likely = 13.33%

Not so likely = 0%

Not at all likely = 0%

What they said.....

The experience broadened my mind to the opportunities for collaboration between different types of businesses.

This trip really helped me with my confidence by meeting others with a similar portfolio of projects.

One of the most worthwhile weeks of my entire career. Well done!

Initially, I wasn't too sure what to expect - by the end of the trip I was really impressed by the whole experience. There was a good diversity of people, some truly amazing experiences, and opportunities for personal development. Everything was engaging and well thought out.