

Tiqets

More ways to culture

How to Overcome Seasonality in Tourism



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Is seasonality in tourism a necessary evil or a challenge you can overcome?

This is the question on the minds of a lot of attractions and travel businesses. The answer directly impacts marketing decision-making – whether to focus your marketing dollars on the times of year people naturally flock to your attraction, or use your budget to try to bring more people during the “off season.” It’s a trade-off, and the stakes might seem particularly high right now. Coming off a few years of less-than-ideal conditions for tourism, no one wants to see their museum or attraction stand empty when it doesn’t have to. And it doesn’t have to.

There are strategies for enticing visitors through your doors even during the dreaded tourism drought, whenever that might happen for your locale. In Cologne, Germany, the Christmas holiday is a big time for celebration, with the world-famous markets of Cathedral City drawing Christian tourists and Der Weihnachtsmann (Santa Claus) enthusiasts from all over the world. During this time, museums and attractions in Cologne, like the Farina Fragrance Museum, are flooded with visitors. But the challenge is to attract more visitors in February, when things get a little more lonesome.

And while the French Riviera is nice all year long, summer is definitely where the buzz lands. Appealing to travelers year-round means convincing them the off season is really just as lovely. On the other hand, one of the reasons the French Riviera is so packed in the summer is because that’s when people go on holiday from work and school. Finding target audiences who can and do vacation at other times of year is essential to flattening the seasonal curve.

There are so many factors to consider, but if there’s one lesson the travel industry has learned over the last few years, it’s that finding new ways to do things pays off. With that spirit, we have some tactical off-season marketing ideas to help you bring some balance to your visitor load all year long.

1. Offer off-season passes and perks

While plenty of amusement parks and museums offer annual passes to enthusiastic visitors, those passholders still predominantly visit during peak times and seasons. One way to specifically boost attendance during the slow times is to offer standalone off-season passes and perks.

Wintertime visitors to the Grand Canyon in the US can't access the full national park, since parts of it are shut down in the colder months, but they can see most of it for discounted rates and among far fewer crowds. Since in-park hotels are actually obtainable during the winter months (unlike in summer, when they're pricey and sell out almost instantly), visitors are lured by this extra perk, too.



The Grand Canyon, USA



Oceanário de Lisboa took a slightly different approach by inviting kids to come for free over summer holiday. This is a technique you can apply to the off season to draw in entire families.

Getting the word out about off-season deals gets a boost when you team up with outside marketing partners such as [online travel agents](#) (OTAs). In addition to Tiqets, countless sites exist to help travelers find great off-season deals, and partnering with those sites will help you take advantage of their marketing prowess and position yourself in front of bargain hunters and crowd haters.



The first step

Take a look at your numbers to see what you stand to gain by lowering prices during the off season. If that's not realistic, consider adding perks, such as blankets for visitors to put in their laps during outside seated events in the cold months. And along with these discounts and perks, emphasize the advantage of experiencing your attraction at a time of year that's less crowded!

2.Cultivate a niche crowd year-round



Mallorca, Spain

Tourists might think of your location as being specific to a particular time of year – ideal for the summer holidays or winter break. In order to change their minds and help them imagine the possibilities, create a PR campaign designed to promote a different time of year – or, heck, all year. Rather than simply hoping to appeal to the masses as the ultimate holiday getaway, position your locale as the right place for a certain crowd, year round.

Mallorca is the largest of the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain, long known as a beachy holiday destination, popular particularly among the millions of British tourists who visit every year. Hard hit by the COVID pandemic, Mallorca’s tourism industry strategized how to bring back tourists in 2021 – and how to break out of the dependence on tourism seasonality.

At the 2021 London World Travel Market – a leading industry event for tourism – Mallorca positioned itself to the British travel market as the “year round training ground” for British sports tourism. With road cycling icon Mark Cavendish as their spokesperson, Mallorca’s tourism industry put itself out there as the [new headquarters of European active tourism](#).

At the same London event, Greece's Minister of Tourism, Vassilis Kikilias, [announced a similar strategy](#) for his country's 2022 tourism efforts:

"We emphasize the special forms of tourism, such as city breaks and high end tourism... and 'illuminate'...lesser known destinations."

How? By marketing popular museums and cultural tourism opportunities alongside Greek cities' sophisticated dining, entertainment, and shopping options.



The first step

Take stock of your visitor data to note which demographics you typically attract. Who's missing? And how could you appeal to them with new events, campaigns, and social media advertising?

3. Launch exhibits and themes at tactical times

A grand launch of an exhibit or new theme at an attraction is a big attention-grabber. Timing such openings for the high season ensures you'll likely get the biggest crowds. But there's another way to approach your openings: plan them for times of year when tourists are scarce, but locals may be looking for things to do. [By giving locals a first chance](#) to have the experience, you can both build buzz and stretch out your window of visitors.

During the pandemic, a lot of museums adopted this tactic by default when global travel was not really happening, and local visitors became an important audience. This new approach was highly successful for a lot of museums, because they were able to cultivate more local visitors than they've historically had.



Gardaland, the most popular and longest-running amusement park in Italy, is characteristically quiet in winter, but this year, they're prepared to change that. With a fun new chocolate sampling tour throughout the park and a special 20% off promotional offer for entry and accommodation, Gardaland is wooing more and more winter travelers.



Europe's largest cultural development to date, the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, was slated to open in December 2020, but pandemic shutdowns ruined that plan. Instead, once the traditional peak summer tourist season had passed, the museum opened in late September, 2021.

A partial reconstruction of the Prussian Royal Palace, it's an over 40,000-square-foot complex containing more than 20,000 artworks from around the world. High-culture publications such as [The Art Newspaper](#) loudly anticipated the Forum's off-season launch, and visitBerlin called the event one of "[Five Reasons to Visit the German Capital in 2022.](#)" Lots of buzz locally and in the art world made the Humboldt Forum's off-season opening a big deal.



The first step

If you have an exciting opening coming up, consider timing it with locals in mind. Invite local journalists and publications as your special guests. Media can be a powerful catalyst for buzz that spreads around the world.

4. Piggyback on popular events in your region

As you think about how to attract more locals and visitors all year long, take a look around. What are other museums and attractions doing in your area? Make sure to look beyond your particular niche. Are there events happening in your city or region that you could hitch your star to?

Count on big-deal sporting events, for example, to bring thousands of visitors who might not ordinarily come to the area just to visit your venue. You may not be on the map for the Tour de France or the Boston Marathon, but are there other nearby sporting events or other types of off-season goings-on your region is known for?

Once you have an event in mind, reach out to the organizers to probe opportunities for sponsorships and partnerships. This might be as simple as tagging the event in your social media posts to create a correlation between that event and your attraction :
“Coming to town for skate around the rink? Extend your day out in Amsterdam with a visit to the Rijksmuseum.”



The first step

Find upcoming off-season events with the potential to attract crowds. Then look for creative ways to partner with those event organizers or simply take advantage of the influx of visitors to your region to up your marketing spend or launch a special offer.

5. Repurpose your venue for the season at hand

Seasonality is not always black and white. Often, there are opportunities within the slower periods of the year – for instance, the December holiday season, when people may be off work and school and tend to travel. While certain locales like beachside locations seem to have the advantage in attracting these tourists, you can provide options for those who want to celebrate in semi-traditional style.



Ski resorts have long used this tactic to make the most of the summer months, repurposing their slopes into waterslides, alpine coasters, mountain biking courses, ropes courses, and even golf ranges. They attract virtually the same adventure-loving crowds that come in winter to recreate, and simultaneously give a boost to local hotels, restaurants, and businesses that depend on the tourist crowd.

Possibly the best example of this technique, however, is the “make it festive” approach. As the winter holidays approach, attractions such as theme parks that are typically thought of as summer-fun destinations magically convert to a winter wonderland. Check out [the Bronx Zoo](#), [the Vienna Christmas Market Tour](#), and [Christmas Season Cruises on the Danube](#) for some chilly but utterly festive ideas.



Christmas market in Vienna, Austria

To be effective, of course, you can't just string up lights and hire a Santa. Consider inviting local makers to a pop-up market like the California Academy of Sciences does for its [Holiday Bazaar](#). Including other local businesses in your festivity planning also increases your marketing scope.



The first step

What's missing in your region's off-season marketing repertoire? Are there holidays you can capitalize on with intriguing events and decor? The answers to these questions are most likely your springboard for repurposing your venue for your region's off-season.

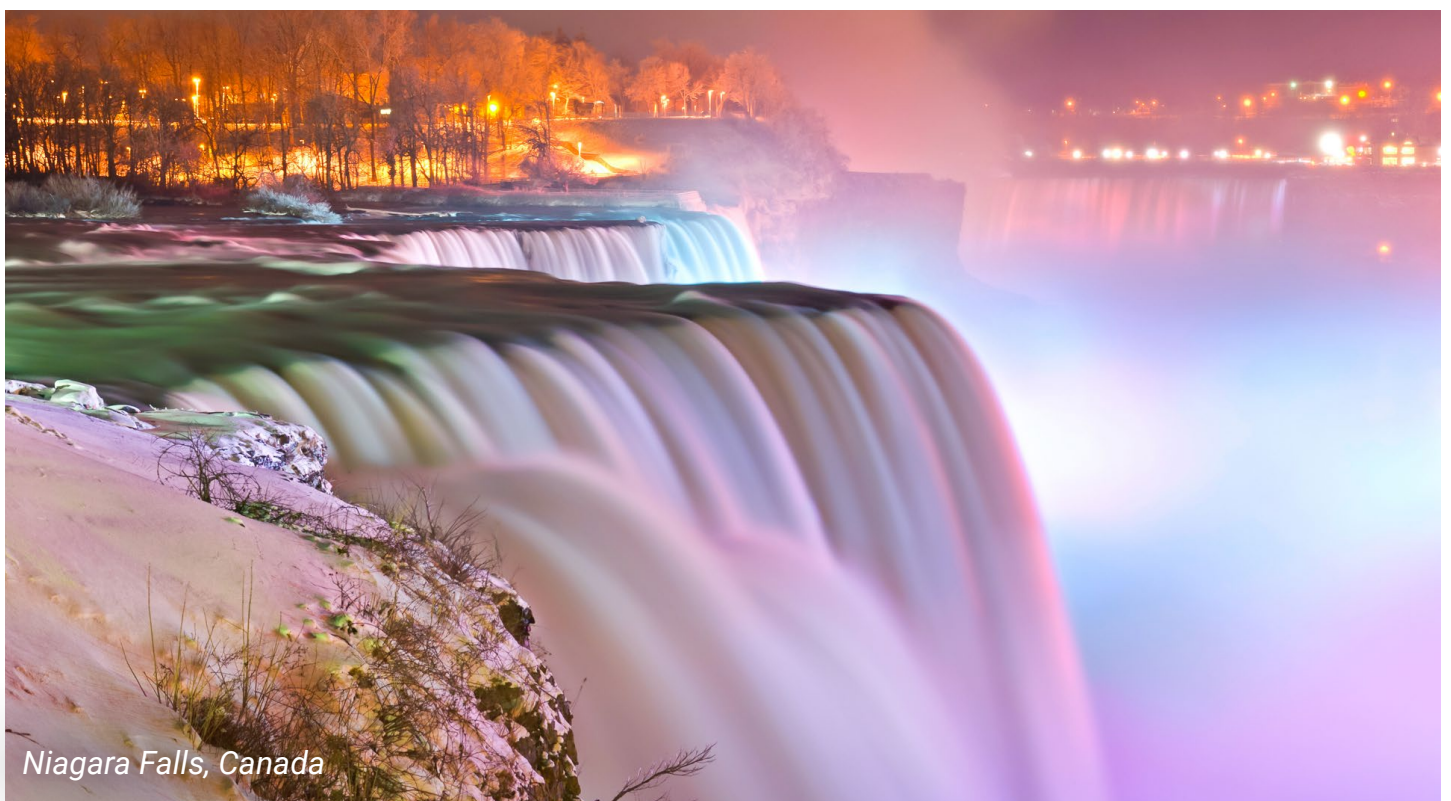
6. Carve out new seasonal moments

Maybe your off season, though, is truly “off.” There are no “B holidays” you can take advantage of, no sporting events, nothing notable with which to entice visitors. No matter. You can still make the most of things. Niagara Falls, New York, is working on this.

The typical January weather report for Niagara Falls is 31 degrees with a fairly good chance of rain or snow. Not surprisingly, “Is it worth going to Niagara Falls in the winter?” is a popular search on Google. And it’s a fair question. Which is why [a recent report by the Niagara Global Tourism Institute](#) highlighted some seasonality disparities:

- Not enough visitors come in winter.
- When visitors do come, they don’t stay very long, which doesn’t support the citywide tourism industry as well as it could.

To some extent these trends make sense, since Niagara Falls is an outdoor attraction and upstate New York is cold and icy in the winter. While a lot of local businesses have been built around Niagara Falls, the falls are still the main draw. So how to bring more visitors during the low season and better support all of the city’s tourist-dependent businesses?



Luckily for Niagara Falls, NY, the city has a direct comparison in its Ontario sister city, also named Niagara Falls, which fares much better during the off season. Canada's Niagara Falls has a few advantages, however, including a large indoor event center, a butterfly conservatory, a bird kingdom, and various other attractions which make for a well-rounded year-round visitor experience.

The takeaway from the New York report? It's time to build up more off-season attractions. Visitors coming to Niagara Falls in January can still enjoy the falls on a sunny day, but spend the drizzly days doing fun things indoors.



The first step

For your single venue or attraction, building up an entire tourism experience in the off-season might be way out of your purview. But take this lesson and apply it to your own brand. What amenities or experiences could you add to make your attraction more enticing in the off-season?

The right off-season marketing strategy for your unique venue

With the right approach, seasonality in tourism is less a necessary evil and more a minor hurdle. Take these ideas and examples and express them in your venue's own way. Count on your marketing partners – OTAs like us! – to help you spread the word that you're not just there for the high-season crowd, but available year-round as a truly worthwhile option.

Want further tips from museums and attractions that hustled and thrived during the ultimate off-season the pandemic?

Check out our on-demand webinar [How 2020's Best Museums Created Award-Winning Visitor Experiences](#), as well as this ebook [Innovative Tourism Strategies to Help Your Venue Recover After COVID-19](#).

Give your visitors more with Tiqets

Whether you need help reaching new visitors, boosting your sales, or improving your visitor experience, Tiqets has the solution for your venue. Join the leading museum and attractions ticketing partner and promote your venue to millions of customers worldwide, today!



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