

Case study 4 - live walking tours and private car tours

Using: Rezdy, Bokun, PPE, contactless payment, social distancing

Brilliant Tours, Liverpool

Brilliant Tours Ltd is a Liverpool based company offering walking tours, step on guides, and guided tours using executive vehicles. They are planning on starting to operate again on July 4, 2020.

Websites: [Brillianttours.com](https://brillianttours.com) and [Beatleswalk.com](https://beatleswalk.com)

Due to the ongoing uncertainty on how attractions might be allowed to open, they have decided to temporarily suspend any combination tours which included entrances to attractions.

Their aim this season is simply to generate enough cashflow to enable them to survive to the start of next season and to keep their team of 35 guides working.

They have decided to focus on four core products:

1) Liverpool socially distanced guided walking tours

Entirely outside in the fresh air, increasing the number of tours from one to three and they are hoping to create a “walking explorer pass”.

Their websites and booking platform will have a safety code of practice, “What a visitor can expect from us” and what they expect from participants during a tour. The Guide will explain this at the beginning of the tour but all of this has been devised in a very positive and encouraging way at the pre-booking or at the start of the tour.

Guides will not wear masks as that won't work, hand gel will be offered to everyone at the start of the tour and they will minimise the opening of doors and contact with anything on route. It is very much a case of doing new Covid19 risk assessments for existing or any new tours you create.

The walking tours will be kept to small groups and they will use as many tour guides as necessary to keep the tours to minimum numbers.

Regarding the actual group size, they had planned a physical test, however, under current rules they can't get a group together to do that. Their suggestion to walking tours is to consider the following for your own area, then do your own test before you restart:

- How quiet are your stops in terms of road noise, because noisy stops mean that the group has to be nearer the guide to hear them. If your tour is a countryside walk then you can easily take 15 people.
- Narrow pavements - are your existing stops on walkways as that will mean other people passing your group, breaking the 2 metre socially distanced rule.



- Review your current stops to find quiet open spaces with more room to explain to your group. If you can achieve this, then you can easily increase your minimum numbers from 6 to 12 guest.
- Do a new risk assessment - re-walk the route and take the opportunity to update photos.

2) Liverpool Private Guided Tours in Luxury Licensed Transport

They have 2 licensed V-class Mercedes for 7 passengers, however, they will limit the numbers to 6 guests as they don't want anyone in the front.

The vehicles have wipeable surfaces and they can steam clean the floor. For luxury guided tours with a higher price point, they will supply a **private personal PPE pack** with gloves, mask, gel, face shield, tissue and disposable bag for every passenger to use.

They are also offering private 90 minute whistle stop tours of Penny Lane, Strawberry Field, and stops outside the Beatles childhood home - they are on sale hourly and our walking tour guides will be offering the private car tours to the walking tour guests.

Many visitors may not want to take a tour on a coach, so worth looking at offering popular tours in smaller vehicles.

3) Private day excursions from Liverpool and Manchester to North Wales, York, Lake District

Same as above

4) Private luxury multi day guided tours of the UK

For multi-day tours, they are working with a Liverpool luxury serviced apartment to create hub and spoke tours from Liverpool. They will arrange the clients' personal shopping list to already be in their apartment so they can cook themselves or they can deliver food prepared by chefs. The focus will be on tours in the fresh air, avoiding the busiest places.

Some challenges:

Feedback cards

Out of all the OTAs, TripAdvisor reviews drive the most sales. Usually they would hand out review cards to clients at the end of the tour to encourage them to leave TA reviews, but while that is not possible, they are planning on introducing either post-tour phone calls, or texts or emails to clients with links to their review page.

Tipping the guide

Tips is another challenging area and they are looking at ways for tour guides to take contactless tips, either using a cheap **contactless device** (for example PayPal) which they can buy themselves or an app.

Toilets

They have asked their local Liverpool Tourist Board what the arrangements are going to be for public toilets as they are all currently closed.



Booking platforms

They sell their tours on many OTA websites, however, some OTAs have a backlog and furloughed staff at the moment, so new product approvals and product change requests can take 4 weeks or more.

TXGB is a VisitBritain initiative and it's a free way to connect but it's still in the early stages, and it still has a confused route to market. More mainstream and great value platforms are **Bokun**, but you will still need to have an account or a contract in place with the OTA first.

Whisper / VOX

Introducing whisper systems is not something they have advocated, and they only use them on walking tours when coach operators or cruise tours request them. The preference has always been to split the groups into smaller groups and their £20 price point for a 2-hour walking tour always kept their group sizes smaller anyway. This allows them to pay the guides properly and achieve a better margin. There is also a contamination risk if you need to help customers set the device up or pass it back to them.

Vox are working on an app which will connect to people's smart phones - but make sure to advise guests to download the app before the tour, so you don't waste time on the walking tour.

Website and bookings

Their websites have been updated in a positive way and they use **Rezdy** as their back-office booking platform, but be aware that **Rezdy** is more expensive than **Bokun**.

Final piece of advice:

- The overriding factor is QUALITY, QUALITY & QUALITY.
- Offer an exceptional tour and make the visitors feel absolutely safe
- Take a refresher course or re-read your course notes about the fundamental principles of guiding
- Try to find a slope or step in a quiet place to make yourself higher than the guests
- You will have to change your technique to sweep around with a group that you can't say "come in close", so re-train your guides
- You need all visitors to leave reviews that specifically say that they felt absolutely safe with you - that's what's going to drive sales
- Visit Britain are having a quality assurance scheme based on a questionnaire - fill that in by all means, but the key to it is your own reviews and making your tour stand out above everyone else's

