

North East England **Experience Maker Toolkit**

How to Create and Deliver Bookable
Visitor Experiences That Celebrate
the Spirit of the North East

www.experiencenortheastengland.co.uk



Produced by **Unmissable
England** in partnership with
Experience North East England



Funded by
UK Government



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Experiential Tourism: Unlocking New Opportunities

The North East of England is a region of contrasts, from wild coastal paths and ancient castles to vibrant cities alive with creativity. Visitors come here for its landscapes, but what they remember most are the stories, the people, and the moments of connection that bring those places to life.

A great North East experience brings together:

- **Resources:** landscapes, coastlines, towns, and cultural sites
- **Products & Services:** accommodation, guides, food, transport
- **Local People & Stories:** the heart of every experience.

When these align, you don't just create a tour, you create a memory.

Experiential tourism goes beyond simply seeing or visiting. It's about doing, feeling, and belonging, giving guests something they can't find on their own.



A tourism product is what you buy; a tourism experience is what you remember.

Canadian Tourism Commission

Experiences should be:

Bookable

Available

Guided

Practical

Memorable

Experiences are not:

Workshops

Courses

Walks

Visiting a place

Components of a Visitor Experience

When you bring the following four components together, that's when you can truly begin to develop your visitor experience.

Each part plays a vital role, and when they connect through a shared story, they create something memorable, meaningful, and uniquely rooted in place. Use the diagram below to help you think about your own experience and how your local resources, people, and services can come together to tell your story.

Your Experience



Resources

Walking / cycling routes
Countryside
Towns & Villages



Goods

Accommodation
Attractions
Restaurants



Local Stories & People

Locals and Experts
Local History & Culture
Independent Businesses



Local Services

Hire Businesses
Luggage Transfer
Tour Guides

Think About Who You Are in This Process

Before you start designing your experience, take a moment to think about your role.

Every experience needs different people to bring it to life and understanding where you fit helps you build stronger partnerships and create something truly memorable.

Who Are You?

Experience Maker

(Host, Lead, Provider)

You're the storyteller and the face of the experience – the person who brings visitors into your world. You design, lead, and deliver the experience from start to finish, shaping the story guests will remember.

Contributor

(Partner, Collaborator)

You work alongside others to enhance an experience. That might mean supplying local produce, leading a specialist activity, or offering access to a unique location or story that complements someone else's experience.

Promoter

(Accommodation Provider, Tourism Business)

You help tell the world about the experience, whether through your business network, website, social media, or destination marketing channels. Promoters play a vital role in connecting experiences with the right audiences.

Remember – You can wear more than one hat. Many of the best experiences in the North East are born from collaboration, where makers, contributors, and promoters work together to create something that truly captures the spirit of the place.

Creating Economic Value

For businesses across North East England, there are huge opportunities to move beyond traditional tourism products and into the world of experiential tourism, where authentic, story-led encounters create deeper connections and higher value.

It shows how tourism businesses can evolve from offering simple goods or services to deliver meaningful, memorable visitor experiences that guests are willing to pay more for and talk about long after they've gone home.



In essence, the further you move from selling things to creating experiences, the greater the economic return and emotional impact.

This model applies to any business, from a small café or farm shop to a heritage attraction, artisan maker, or outdoor activity provider. By weaving together your place, story, and people, you can elevate your offer, turning what you do every day into something truly special for visitors.

From products to experiences, as your offer becomes more authentic, differentiated, and immersive, the value to both your guests and your business increases.

"For businesses across the North East of England, there are huge opportunities to move beyond traditional tourism products and into the world of experiential tourism, where authentic, story-led encounters create deeper connections and higher value.

The Canadian Tourism Commission describes this shift as "The Progression of Economic Value."



Creating a Visitor Experience



The story, people, place and participation are the key elements of any experience. These elements bring depth, meaning, and authenticity to what you offer, turning an ordinary activity into something unforgettable.



The Story

- It starts by establishing **YOUR** story of the experience

People

- Who will lead?
- Who will you work with?
- Who else will your guests interact with?
- What is your expertise and passion?

Place

- Where are you planning to take your guests?
- Are you giving access to a location or venue they wouldn't have access to unless they were doing this experience?
- Is this place memorable?

Participation

- What will your guests do?
- What hands-on activities are you including in your experience?
- Who will be leading these activities?
- Are your activities memorable?





Here's How Each One Applies to Your Experience:

The Story

Every experience begins with a story. It might be rooted in local heritage, nature, food, or your own personal journey. Keep your story clear and consistent, it's the heartbeat that gives your experience purpose and personality.

Ask yourself:

- What story am I telling?
- Why does it matter to me and to my guests?
- How will I share it in a way that connects emotionally?

The People

People make the difference. Visitors want to meet the real characters behind a place; locals, makers, guides, storytellers, and you. Their warmth, knowledge, and enthusiasm turn moments into memories.

Ask yourself:

- Who will lead the experience?
- Who else will guests meet along the way?
- How will you make visitors feel like locals for the day?

The Place

Place gives your experience its setting and soul. Think about the landscapes, coastlines, towns, and hidden corners that make your part of the North East special. Offer guests access to places or perspectives they wouldn't find on their own.

Ask yourself:

- Where will you take your guests?
- Is it a place they couldn't easily access without you?
- What makes it truly memorable?

Participation

Participation is what transforms guests from observers into doers. Hands-on moments, such as cooking, walking, tasting, creating, and discovering, make your story come alive and help visitors form a real connection.

Ask yourself:

- What will guests actually do?
- How can they interact, learn, or create something?
- What will they take away from the experience? Knowledge, skills, or inspiration?

When story, people, place, and participation come together, you don't just deliver an activity, you create a sense of belonging. That's what makes an experience unmissable.

What Is the Difference Between a Tour and a Visitor Experience?

The following chart highlights the differences between a guided tour and a visitor experience. The more (TICKS) you can apply to your experience the more experiential it will become.

	Tour	Experience
Led by a guide	Yes	Yes
Led by an expert	Yes	Yes or no*
Transit between locations included in pricing	Yes	Yes
All refreshments included in pricing	No	Yes
Access to venues included in pricing	No	Yes
A compelling story is told throughout	No	Yes
Create an emotional connection between visitor and location	No	Yes
Provide visitors with hands-on activities to participate in and / or the opportunity of learning a new skill	No	Yes
A unique opportunity only available to guests and that they could not do by themselves	No	Yes
Visitors feel like locals	No	Yes
Can go beyond a single activity, location or attraction	No	Yes

*It's OK not to be an expert if you are running the activity - for example you may not be a professional chef but you may really enjoy cooking; therefore pitch your experience around 'cooking with a local'.

Ask yourself...

Can visitors do this experience alone and without booking my experience?

If the answer is yes, then you have some work to do. You want your experience to be so special that guests can only book your experience in order to do it.



Five Steps to Create Your Own Experience

01.	Establish your story	Like all good stories your experience should have a good start, middle and end. Tell your story well and keep it simple and memorable. Don't include too many elements that will steer away from your overall story of your experience, making it difficult to remember.
02.	Guests get hungry	Unlike a classic tour, all meals and refreshments are included within the experience price. So, if your experience is over a meal time you should include food and drink and where possible use locally sourced produce to further enhance your local story. Don't include food/drink as an option.
03.	The unexpected	Give your guests a surprise! Include something within your experience that will create lasting memories. However big or small, the surprise will create great moments for your guests to share with their friends and family.
04.	The expected	Surprises are great, but as well as the unexpected it's good to include some of the expected elements in your experience. For example, fish and chips in an old English pub. International visitors will love it and if it's done well and fits with your overall story it can be a real highlight for guests.
05.	Keep it simple	Every guest is different, every group is different, so you'll need to be flexible when developing your experience. Allowing extra time for groups that like to take their time or have an extra place to visit for groups that speed through the experience.





North East Experiential Themes

We've created four key experiential themes to help businesses shape their experiences around their own stories. Within each theme are local topics and ideas that can be explored, expanded, and made your own.

The North East has so much to offer visitors – from coastlines and castles to film sets and foodie hotspots. You might find that your story crosses over more than one theme, and that's perfectly fine, as long as your experience has a clear focus and a strong, authentic story at its heart.

Food & Drink	Taste the North East through its people, produce, and places.	• Market-to-table and street food experiences. • Brewery and distillery tours. • Coastal foraging and seafood cook-ups. • Chef-led cookery and tasting workshops. • Farm visits and local producer trails.
TV, Film & Music	Step into the scenes, sounds, and stories that put the North East on screen.	• Behind-the-scenes film location tours. • Music heritage walks and storytelling gigs. • Screen tourism linked to Vera, Indiana Jones, 28 Years Later, and Harry Potter. • Immersive experiences inspired by local arts and pop culture. • Creative workshops blending film, photography, and performance.
Active Pursuits	Explore the region's wild beauty through hands-on adventure.	• Coastal kayaking, paddleboarding, and wild swimming. • Guided hikes and cycling routes through the National Park and National Landscapes and beyond. • Yoga, wellness, and cold-water therapy by the sea. • Wildlife and photography adventures on land or water. • Starlit walks, nature trails, and outdoor challenges.
History & Heritage	Bring the North East's past to life through people and place.	• Story-led castle and cathedral tours. • Industrial heritage and shipbuilding experiences. • Roman and Anglo-Saxon history along Hadrian's Wall. • Living history re-enactments and guided heritage walks. • Myths, legends, and folklore storytelling.

Case study: Triple A Food Tours Tasting the North East



Triple A Food Tours is one of the North East's leading experiential tourism providers, showcasing the region's vibrant food and drink culture through story-led, locally connected tours. Founded by Amy Whitfield, a proud North Easterner and lifelong foodie, the business brings together the region's best producers, chefs, and venues to create experiences that are as warm and welcoming as the people who make them.

Amy launched Triple A Food Tours in 2018 after spotting a gap in the visitor market for authentic, locally guided food experiences. What began as a single walking tour in Newcastle has grown into a portfolio of immersive journeys that celebrate the North East's rich landscapes and culinary creativity, from city streets to coastal villages.

The Experiences

A Taste of Newcastle

This flagship tour offers an insider's look at Newcastle's independent food scene. It begins at the Grainger Market, where guests meet traders and sample everything from Northumberland cheese to the city's famous stotties. The route winds through Grainger Town and the Central Arcade, stopping at venues such as Kaltur Wine Bar & Tapas, SnackWallah, and The French Quarter, each sharing their story of craft, culture, and community.

Guests taste locally roasted coffee at Laneway & Co, enjoy small plates at a family-run restaurant, and end with a locally brewed beer or artisan spirit near the Quayside, overlooking the Tyne Bridge. Along the way, the tour layers local food stories with the city's history, from coal and commerce to creativity and cuisine.

Meet the Makers Food Tour

This experience takes guests beyond the city to meet the producers shaping the North East's modern food identity. A scenic journey through Northumberland and County Durham introduces small-scale makers such as Northumberland Cheese Company in Blagdon, Ad Gefrin Distillery in Wooler, and Northumberland Honey Co. near Haltwhistle.

Guests enjoy private tastings, behind-the-scenes tours, and conversations with the people whose passion keeps local traditions alive. The tour often includes a lunch stop at a countryside inn or farm café, where dishes are prepared using ingredients from the very producers guests have met earlier in the day.

Northumberland Coastline Food Tour

This experience blends breathtaking coastal scenery with outstanding local flavours. Guests follow a route through the villages of Craster, Alnmouth, Warkworth, and Amble, visiting family-run producers and seafood specialists. Highlights include a visit to the Craster Smokehouse for freshly smoked kippers, a stop at The Fish Shack in Amble for local crab and langoustine, and a tasting at Lindisfarne Mead on Holy Island.

Along the way, guides share tales of coastal life, fishing heritage, and the region's growing reputation for artisan food and drink. The tour often ends with a leisurely beach walk or an informal seafood picnic, connecting guests to the landscape that has inspired Northumbrian cuisine for generations.

Durham Food Tour

This guided walking experience takes guests on a flavour-filled journey through the city's cobbled streets, introducing them to the people, produce, and places that define Durham's vibrant food scene. Led by a local foodie expert, visitors sample everything from freshly roasted coffee and artisan chocolate to seasonal small plates and local ales, all while uncovering stories that connect the city's medieval heritage with its modern culinary creativity. It's the perfect experience for food lovers who want to taste the real spirit of Durham.

Why it works

Triple A Food Tours embodies the essence of experiential tourism, connecting story, people, place, and participation. Each experience allows guests to meet real people, taste real food, and explore authentic locations that define the North East's culinary identity.

Amy's approach is intentionally collaborative. She handpicks venues that share her values around sustainability, inclusivity, and local sourcing. Each partner, from independent cafés to small producers, gains visibility and support through the tours, creating a ripple effect across the regional visitor economy.

Her success has been recognised nationally, with features in VisitEngland's Tourism Superstar Awards. Through Triple A Food Tours, Amy has built a network of passionate local ambassadors, all telling the North East's story, one bite at a time.

Key Takeaways - Triple A Food Tours demonstrates how food can be a powerful gateway to place. By combining passionate local storytelling, deep community partnerships, and access to authentic venues, Amy Whitfield has turned a love of local food into an award-winning model for experiential tourism.

Guests don't just eat their way around the North East, they connect with its people, its history, and its heart.

Other Experience Case Studies

Active Pursuits



CBK Adventure Co – Finnish Sauna Experience / Quayside Glow Tours

Based on Tynemouth's iconic coast, CBK Adventure Co blends adventure with wellness. Guests can paddle along the river on the Quayside Glow Tour, lighting up the Tyne in illuminated kayaks as night falls over Newcastle. Afterwards, the Finnish Sauna Experience offers a restorative contrast, a traditional wood-fired sauna overlooking the sea, followed by an invigorating cold-water dip. Together, they create a balance of adrenaline and relaxation, rooted in the North East's coastal lifestyle.



Farne Island Boat Tours – Grey Seal & Seabird Cruise

Departing from Seahouses, this family-run operator takes visitors on unforgettable journeys around the Farne Islands. Guests cruise past dramatic cliffs alive with puffins, guillemots, and kittiwakes, and often spot the resident grey seal colony basking on the rocks. Skippers share local tales of lighthouses, shipwrecks, and island life, bringing both wildlife and history vividly to life.



Shore Yoga – Sunrise Yoga by the Sea

Held on the beaches of Tynemouth and Whitley Bay, Shore Yoga transforms early mornings into mindful moments. Guests roll out their mats on the sand, guided through gentle movement and breathwork as the sun rises over the North Sea. The sessions blend wellbeing, nature, and community, offering a peaceful reset rooted in the rhythm of the tide.



TV, Film & Music Experiences



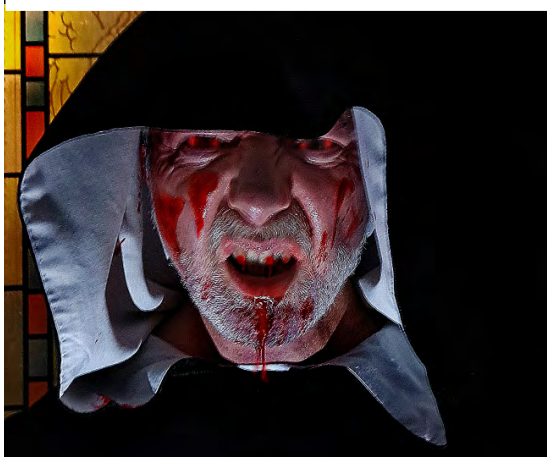
Curious Compass – Apocalypse Survival Tour: 28 Years Later

Created by local storytellers Curious Compass, this immersive walking experience reimagines Northumberland through the lens of post-apocalyptic film culture. Guests step into scenes from 28 Years Later, exploring filming locations and learning urban survival skills along the way. It's part walking tour, part live theatre, blending storytelling, history, and a dash of cinematic suspense.



Overland Adventures – 28 Years Later Experience

Building on the buzz around the new 28 Years Later production, Overland Adventures offers guests the chance to explore filming landscapes across the North East by 4x4. From abandoned airfields to rugged countryside, visitors experience the film's atmosphere first-hand, guided by local experts who share insights into the region's growing screen tourism scene.



History Tour by Night – Plague, Panic and Survival at Blackfriars

Begin your evening with a zombie-themed cocktail before enjoying a three-course dinner in the UK's oldest dining room – a 13th-century former Dominican friary in the heart of Newcastle. After dinner, join an expert guide for a 45-minute torchlit tour uncovering tales of plague, panic, and survival. Blending history and legend, this immersive experience brings the city's medieval past vividly to life within the haunting walls of a Grade I Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Targeting Your Experience to the Right Audience

Designing an experience is one thing, making sure it reaches the right people is another. Understanding who your audience is will help you tailor your story, price, and marketing to attract the guests most likely to book, enjoy, and recommend what you offer.

The North East attracts a wide range of visitors, from local explorers to international travellers following film trails, coastal routes, or food adventures. The key is to identify which markets fit best with your experience and focus your energy there.

1 Know Who You're Talking To

Ask yourself:

- Who is your experience designed for?
- What do they care about most? Food, history, nature, music, adventure, or relaxation?
- How do they prefer to book? Through an Online Travel Agent (OTA), or via travel trade partners?

Understanding these factors will help you shape your product and message.

2 Core Audience Types in the North East

Here are some common visitor types to help you identify your ideal guests:

Local Explorers – Residents of the North East who love discovering something new close to home. They often book last minute, value affordability, and are loyal repeat customers.

Domestic Discoverers – Visitors from across the UK, often on short breaks or weekends away. They're curious, love hidden gems, and are motivated by food, culture, and authentic local stories.

Active Adventurers – Travellers who want to explore the region's coastlines, countryside, and nature. They value experiences that combine challenge with reward; from hiking and cycling to yoga by the sea.

Cultural & Heritage Seekers – Visitors drawn to the North East's castles, cathedrals, and stories. They're interested in guided experiences, local legends, and meaningful storytelling.

Screen & Story Fans – Visitors inspired by film and TV productions such as Vera, Indiana Jones, Harry Potter, and 28 Years Later. They're motivated by immersion and love interactive or themed experiences.

International Visitors – Guests from overseas who often plan 6–12 months ahead. They seek curated, easy-to-book experiences with local hosts, and they expect a premium, high-quality experience that feels authentically English.

3 Tailor Your Offer

Once you know who your audience is, adapt your experience accordingly:

Language & Tone: Use language your target audience connects with.

Booking Behaviour: Make sure your experience is available on the platforms your audience uses: locals book direct, while international guests often use OTAs or trade partners.

Duration & Pricing: Offer shorter, lower-cost options for locals and longer, higher-value versions for international markets.

Timing: Local and domestic visitors often book last minute, while international travellers plan months in advance, so adjust your availability accordingly.

4 Work With Your LVEP and New Adventures

Your local LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership) and New Adventures platform can help you reach the right audience.

They can:

- Feature your experience in regional and national campaigns
- Connect you to visitor insights and market research
- Help you refine your message and positioning for specific audiences.

5 Keep Learning About Your Guests

After each experience, ask guests where they came from and how they found you. This simple question gives valuable insight into your market reach and helps refine your marketing focus over time.

Tip: You don't need to appeal to everyone. Focus on the audience that best fits your story, location, and personality. The more clearly you define your ideal guest, the easier it becomes to attract them.



Cost vs Profits

When starting to develop your experience idea, you'll need to think carefully about how much to charge per person or per group to cover all your outgoing costs and make a profit.

It's good practice to count your time as a cost, especially if you're running your business full-time or providing the experience yourself. Don't forget to factor in hidden or annual costs such as insurance, website hosting, marketing materials, training, or membership fees and estimate the number of guests you expect to welcome across the year.

Partnerships and negotiation can make a big difference. For example, speak to the café, pub, or boat company you plan to include in your experience, you might be able to agree a discounted trade rate per head in return for bringing them regular business throughout the season. Everyone wins.

Example - 'Castles, Coast & Cuisine' A Full Day Experience

A 7-hour guided experience exploring Northumberland's coastline and heritage, combining walking, local food, and storytelling. Priced at £120 per person, based on a group of 4. The business uses an online booking system.

Cost Breakdown	Per Person	Per Group of 4
Planning and admin (bookings, enquiries, scheduling)	£10	£40
Guiding and delivery (7 hours)	£70	£280
Booking system fee (4%)	£4.80	£19.20
Venue entry (castle donation)	£1	£4
Equipment hire (walking poles, transport, etc.)	£5	£20
Refreshments (local lunch and drink)	£8	£32
Local marketing (leaflets, online promotion)	£0.40	£1.60
Transport/fuel (pick-up and drop-off)	£0.20	£0.80
Insurance and licences	£0.20	£0.80
Total Cost	£99.60	£398.40
Profit	£20.40	£81.60

It's perfectly normal for costs and profits to vary depending on the type of experience you run, but always make sure your pricing reflects the value and quality of what you're offering. Remember, a well-designed, story-led experience can often command a higher price because it delivers something guests can't do anywhere else.

Taking Your Experience to Market



Simply having your experience listed on your own website won't be enough to attract a large number of bookings.

How will visitors know you exist?

There are many ways to market your experience, but successful marketing goes far beyond a single web page or a stack of leaflets in local cafés. While these are good starting points, they rarely generate the consistent visibility and volume of bookings needed to grow your business.

The key is to widen your reach and make your experience easy to find, and easy to book, wherever potential visitors are looking.

The North East attracts a mix of audiences: local day-trippers, domestic staycationers, and international visitors following film trails, heritage routes, and food journeys. To reach them effectively, you'll need a combination of marketing and distribution tools that connect you to both regional and global audiences.



Ways to Get Your Experience Noticed

Work with Experience North East England (ENEE), your North East's LVEPs and/or local authorities:

The North East's LVEPs (including Visit Northumberland, Visit County Durham, Visit NewcastleGateshead) and local authorities in Sunderland, North Tyneside and South Tyneside work together under Experience North East England to grow and promote the region's visitor economy.

By connecting with ENEE, your LVEP, or local authorities can gain access to marketing campaigns, business support, training, and opportunities to feature your experience in regional promotions and itineraries.

Onboard Your Experience to New Adventures:

This new regional booking and storytelling platform showcases bookable experiences across the North East of England, giving visitors a single place to discover authentic adventures, tours, and activities.

Onboarding your experience to New Adventures increases your visibility and allows your product to be promoted as part of the wider regional offer, reaching audiences looking for genuine, local, and sustainable experiences.

<https://newadventures.org.uk>

Use Online Travel Agents (OTAs):

List your experience on global platforms such as Viator, GetYourGuide, Expedia, and Airbnb Experiences. These sites invest heavily in marketing, reaching audiences around the world, and driving traffic directly to bookable experiences.

Connect Through Distribution Platforms:

FareHarbor – a powerful booking and business management system designed specifically for tours and activities. It allows you to take online bookings, manage your schedule, process payments, and connect with distribution partners like Viator and GetYourGuide, New Adventures and Unmissable England.

Bókun – a comprehensive reservation system and distribution network owned by Tripadvisor, designed for tour and activity operators. It allows you to automate bookings, manage staff schedules, accept payments, and seamlessly sync your inventory across global marketplaces like Viator, Tripadvisor, and GetYourGuide.

Tell Your Story Online:

Use social media, photography, and short videos to showcase your people, place, and passion. Real stories connect best with potential visitors, especially when shared through authentic voices and local insights.

A Note on Commission

When you list your experience on OTAs or booking platforms, you'll pay a commission fee per booking, typically between 10% and 25%.

It's important not to view this as a loss, but as part of your marketing cost. Every product or business pays for marketing in some form, whether through advertising, printing, or time spent on promotion. Commission is simply the cost of being visible on platforms that reach thousands (or millions) of potential customers you might never attract on your own.

Think of it as your pay-per-sale marketing investment, one that only applies when a booking is confirmed.



The more widely your experience is distributed and the easier it is to book, the more visible and successful it becomes. Your availability is your visibility.

How to Deliver Your Experience From Start to Finish



10 useful steps to follow

1 Before the Experience Takes Place

After a guest books, reach out to thank them and share all the details they'll need. This first contact sets the tone, so be warm, professional, and helpful.

Check if guests have any dietary needs, accessibility requirements, or health considerations, especially for active or outdoor experiences. Make sure your marketing clearly explains what's included, such as food, drink, or physical activity level (for example, "a three-hour walk along uneven coastal paths").

A week before the experience, send a friendly reminder confirming the start time and meeting point. Offer directions, parking advice, or train pick-up options if needed. This is also a great opportunity to build excitement and check that guests are ready for their day out.

And don't forget to ask where your visitors are from, it's a great conversation starter later on!

2 Introductions

Welcome your guests with warmth and enthusiasm. Learn their names, ask about their journey, and make them feel at home. A friendly cup of tea or coffee goes a long way.

Outline the plan for the day, what you'll be doing, where you'll be going, and when. This helps guests feel comfortable and gives structure to their experience. You might want to leave a few surprises to create moments of delight later.

Show a map of the route or locations you'll visit, pointing out rest stops and key sights. This helps everyone visualise the journey ahead and feel confident about what's to come.

3 Tell Your Story

Now it's time to bring your story to life. Share facts, anecdotes, and insights that capture your guests' imaginations. Like any good story, your experience should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Costumes, props, or visual aids can add fun and authenticity; just make sure they fit naturally with your theme. Encourage guests to take photos and pause at scenic spots. These moments not only enhance their experience but also help promote your business when shared online.

Remember, storytelling doesn't start when guests arrive; it begins in your marketing and continues throughout the experience. Every word and action should reinforce the story you're telling.

4 Participation

Engagement is what turns a tour into an experience. Introduce each activity clearly so guests understand what they're doing, why it matters, and how to get involved.

You don't have to be a professional expert, just passionate and knowledgeable. For example, you might not be a trained chef, but you can still offer "Cooking with a Local" or "Foraging by the Sea."

Keep linking each activity back to your story. Show how what they're doing fits into the bigger picture. These hands-on moments, tasting, crafting, walking, or creating, are what your guests will remember most.



5 Check In With Your Guests

Keep an eye on how your guests are feeling. Is there laughter, chatter, and energy? If not, look for ways to lift the mood, a funny story, a quick rest, or a surprise moment can help.

Every group is different. Mixed groups may chat easily, while private groups can be quieter. Read the room and adjust your tone accordingly. Keep everyone informed about what's happening next to maintain a sense of flow and anticipation.

Include something unexpected, a behind-the-scenes peek, a local treat, or a fun fact. Small surprises often create big memories.



6 Food & Drink

If your experience includes a meal or snack, make sure it connects naturally to your story. Always check dietary requirements when guests book and coordinate with venues to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Consider details such as:

- Accessibility (step-free access, parking)
- Dog-friendly areas
- Facilities and changing places.

Use local produce wherever possible. For example, lunch in a historic inn, foraging the coast before cooking over an open fire, or a hilltop picnic with local cheeses and chutneys.

All meals and refreshments should be included in your price, no hidden extras. This avoids awkward moments when bills appear mid-experience. If guests offer to buy you a drink at the end, that's a lovely bonus!

For longer days, plan a second hands-on activity after lunch to re-energise the group and keep momentum going.

7 No Awkward Moments

Guests love feeling like locals for the day, meeting the people you know and being welcomed into your community. These genuine connections are often what they remember most.

As the experience winds down, take time to chat and reflect. Avoid topics like politics or religion and always keep conversation light and inclusive.

If guests mention how much they enjoyed the day, encourage them to leave a review. Explain how valuable reviews are for small businesses and provide links to sites like Google or TripAdvisor.



9 A Take Away Moment!

Give your guests something to take home: a small token that keeps their memories alive.

It could be:

- A recipe card from a cooking session
- A locally made product
- A postcard or story card tied to your theme.

Include the cost of this gift in your pricing and make it part of the experience's final flourish.

8 Leave Your Guests on a High

End your experience with a memorable moment, a beautiful viewpoint, a local pub, or a heartfelt thank you.

A great experience leaves guests happily tired but reluctant to leave. If you offer other experiences, mention them here, or suggest local places they might enjoy while in the area.

If you have a shop or product tie-in, finish there. Guests who've formed a connection with you and your story are far more likely to make a purchase.



10 After the Experience

The day after, send a thank-you message. Check they got home safely, tell them how much you enjoyed hosting them, and share review links. Staying connected helps build loyalty. Follow or tag guests on social media; many will post photos or stories about their experience, which helps spread the word organically.

If they haven't yet left a review, gently remind them how much it supports your business.

Congratulations, you've just delivered a successful, memorable experience!

Every group will be different, but by following these steps, and staying true to your story, you'll create moments your guests will talk about long after they've gone home.

Experience Builder Form

Print out this form and use it to start building the perfect visitor experience.

Questions to guide your experience design.

What is the name of your experience?		
People	Who will your guests meet and interact with?	
	How will you make them feel like a local?	
Write a short description of your new experience.	Describe what you'll do and include details of your planned itinerary. Write as if you're selling your experience on your website and inspire guests to book!	
What is the overall story of your experience?		
Place	Where will you take your guests?	
	Will you offer special access to a location or activity they couldn't do on their own?	
What are your 3 key highlights?	1	
	2	
	3	
Who is your audience or market? i.e. Domestic visitors, international travellers, families, couples, groups, etc		
Participants	What will you do with your guests?	
	What hands-on or interactive activities will they take part in?	
What will you charge per person or per group?		
How long will the experience last?		
Will you offer different versions for different audiences or markets?		
What insurance or licences will you need to operate safely and legally? e.g. public liability insurance, food hygiene certificate, alcohol licence or transport licence.		

Experience Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you've covered all the essentials before hosting your experience

Public Liability Insurance	Unless your experience is fully covered by a third-party platform such as Airbnb Experiences, you'll need your own insurance to protect both you and your guests. Contact: An insurance broker or specialist in tourism and leisure cover.	☐
Licensing	If you're transporting guests, you must hold the correct licence and vehicle insurance to meet legal requirements. If your experience includes alcohol (e.g. tastings, pub visits, or drinks service), you'll also need the relevant alcohol licence. Contact: Your local council (District, Unitary, or County).	☐
Food Hygiene Certificate	If your experience involves preparing or handling food, even as part of a hands-on activity, you'll need an up-to-date food hygiene certificate. Contact: Accredited food safety training providers or online training websites.	☐
Register Your Food or Drink Business	If you prepare or serve food and drink on your premises, you must be registered with your local authority. This also applies if your experience operates from a fixed location that includes food or drink preparation.	☐
Marketing	Create a marketing plan that outlines how you'll reach your target audience. Onboard your experience to New Adventures, the regional platform for bookable North East experiences and share it with your local LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership) such as Visit Northumberland, Visit County Durham, or Visit NewcastleGateshead.	☐
Market Research	Know your audience. Who are you trying to attract, and what motivates them? Access the latest insights and visitor trends through VisitEngland, VisitBritain, and your regional LVEP.	☐
Booking System	Decide how you'll manage bookings: Use a dedicated booking system like FareHarbor or Bókun to seamlessly link your experience with global platforms and online travel agents. You can also manage simple bookings manually using spreadsheets, though automated systems save time and help you scale.	☐
Pricing Structure	Build your pricing carefully, including all costs and commissions from OTAs or distributors. Remember commission isn't a loss; it's part of your marketing cost and helps your experience reach wider audiences.	☐
Terms and Conditions	Whether you're joining a platform, working with an LVEP, or connecting to a booking system, always read the terms and conditions, so you understand what you're agreeing to.	☐
Cancellation Policies	Create your own cancellation and refund policy and be ready to align with the policies of any platforms or distributors you work with. Clear and fair terms help manage guest expectations and protect your business.	☐

Useful Links and Additional Resources

Explore these websites and platforms to help you create, promote, and manage your visitor experience across the North East of England and beyond.

Regional Platforms & Partnerships

New Adventures – The regional platform for discovering and booking authentic, story-led experiences across the North East of England.

www.newadventures.org.uk

Visit Northumberland – Promote your experience within one of England's most scenic and historic counties on their visitor facing website.

www.visitnorthumberland.com

This is Durham – Promote your experience to thousands of potential visitors by featuring it on ThisIsDurham.com, the county's official visitor website. Reaching a wide audience of people planning their trip to Durham, it's the perfect platform to showcase your business and inspire visitors to book and explore.

www.thisisdurham.com

NewcastleGateshead – Showcase your experience on NewcastleGateshead.com, the go-to website for people planning a visit to Newcastle and Gateshead. With engaging content, inspiring itineraries and high search visibility, it's an ideal platform to put your business in front of visitors looking for things to see and do in the city.

www.newcastlegateshead.com

Visit North Tyneside – Feature your experience on VisitNorthTyneside.com, the official tourism website for the North Tyneside coast and surrounding areas. From beaches and heritage attractions to events and activities, it's the perfect place to reach visitors looking to explore, book, and enjoy everything the area has to offer.

www.visitnorthtyneside.com

My Sunderland – Showcase your experience on MySunderland.co.uk. Highlighting the city's attractions and food and drink venues, it's an excellent platform to connect with visitors and inspire them to discover and book experiences across Sunderland.

www.mysunderland.co.uk

Visit South Tyneside – The official destination website inspiring visitors to discover South Shields, Hebburn and Jarrow, along with the coastal villages of Boldon, Cleadon and Whitburn. Showcasing places to stay, things to do, events and experiences, it helps connect visitors with the best of South Tyneside.

www.visitsouthtyneside.co.uk



Booking & Distribution Platforms

FareHarbor – A leading online booking and management system for tours, attractions, and experiences.

www.fareharbor.com

Viator – A global marketplace for bookable tours and experiences.

www.viator.com

GetYourGuide – An international booking platform promoting high-quality local experiences.

www.getyourguide.co.uk

Expedia Local Expert – Provides global visibility through Expedia's travel network.

www.expedia.com/things-to-do

Airbnb Experiences – Host small-group experiences directly to international travellers.

www.airbnb.co.uk/experiences

Virgin Experience Days – A premier UK gift marketplace driving high-intent voucher buyers to local experience providers.

www.virginexperiencedays.co.uk

Bókun – A comprehensive reservation system and distribution network owned by Tripadvisor for experience operators.

www.bokun.io

National Tourism & Research

VisitEngland – The national tourism agency for England, offering research, business advice, toolkits, and marketing opportunities.

www.visitengland.com

VisitBritain – For international marketing campaigns, global partnerships, and research insights into overseas visitor trends.

www.visitbritain.org

Unmissable England – The national leader in experiential tourism development. Unmissable England helps businesses design, refine, and market immersive visitor experiences across England, with training, case studies, and direct booking opportunities.

www.unmissableengland.com



Business Support & Training

Experience North East England – Access toolkits, training opportunities, and guidance designed to help visitor economy businesses develop and grow.

www.experiencenortheastengland.co.uk

North East Growth Hub – Funding, training, and business resources for tourism and hospitality operators.

www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk

Visit NewcastleGateshead – The LVEP for Newcastle and Gateshead, supporting local tourism businesses and promoting the area's visitor economy through destination development, business support and promotion.

<https://experiencenortheastengland.co.uk/newcastle-gateshead-local-visitor-economy-partnership>

Visit County Durham – The LVEP for the county of Durham, driving sustainable growth in the visitor economy through destination development, business support and promotion.

www.visitcountydurham.org

Visit Northumberland – The LVEP for the county of Northumberland, providing business support, insights, and opportunities to help tourism operators grow and thrive across the county's visitor economy.

www.visitnorthumberland.com

My Sunderland – The official website for Sunderland, providing information and support for those looking to live, work, study, invest, or start a business in the city.

www.mysunderland.co.uk



Acknowledgements & Disclaimer

This toolkit has been written and produced by Unmissable England on behalf of Experience North East England and participating Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), including Visit Northumberland, Visit County Durham, and Visit NewcastleGateshead.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this toolkit is accurate and up to date at the time of publication. However, Unmissable England and Experience North East England accept no responsibility for any errors, omissions, or loss arising from reliance on the information contained within this document.

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