



**Quality · Expertise
Independent**

JOIN THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

How to become an AITO Agent?

You only need to meet a few simple criteria to become an AITO Specialist Travel Agent.

You must be an independent travel retailer and have complete freedom of choice over the holidays your agency sells.

The agency will need to have been trading for a minimum of 2 years and be a member of a recognised trade association, namely ABTA, TTA or Global.

If you're a larger company then you need to have no more than 10 branches and/or your turnover should represent no more than 10% of the overall membership.

You must as an agency be prepared to commit to supporting the promotion and sales of AITO supplier members' products & services.

We want our members to engage with their association so we'd like your agency to commit to attending at least 1 AITO organised event per year.



What is AITO Specialist Travel Agents all about?

Essentially, it's a networking club for like minded, quality businesses.

As a longstanding independent travel agent you'll pride yourself on delivering exceptional quality holidays & service to your clients and those holidays won't necessarily be 'off the peg'. They'll be crafted and meticulously planned. The AITO Operator members pride themselves on delivering exactly the same high standard of services and bringing the two elements together has resulted in the highly successful AITO Specialist Travel Agents partnership.

The partnership, which is administrated by a panel of travel agents and tour operators working together, is a catalyst for bringing together like minded companies to further business for the benefit of both parties.

Many AITO Operators have unique product and all members offer the highest standards of holiday planning and service to travel agents. We bring agents and operators together in a series of events ranging from conferences & workshops to social events such as a trip on the British Pullman.

All our events have camaraderie and the spirit of AITO running through them and that spirit is partnership. We have the Closer Ties agreement which is an agreement between the operators & agents covering commission and sales policy to ensure a level playing field and our AITO All Stars league which measures sales performance from agents for AITO Operators.

Our top AITO All Stars sellers are recognised in a glittering award ceremony each January and can earn credits to be redeemed against AITO events. Running alongside the All Stars is the AITO Excellence scheme where AITO Agents can have their commitment to and their engagement with the association recognised by achieving Silver, Gold & Platinum recognition.

Agent members also receive window stickers & point of sale material, sustainable tourism & quality charter material, a brochure drop from AITO operators twice per year & a quarterly newsletter as well as listing on the main AITO.com website. This alone has generated quality business for our members from the find an agent section.

We also want AITO Specialist Travel Agents to be at the centre of working together with AITO companies to create the very best holiday experiences for clients and to maximise on the revenue earning opportunities that come from that partnership.

- Access to quality products
- Retain your individuality
- Get support from likeminded businesses
- Become part of an exclusive networking club
- Take advantage of a wealth of knowledge & experience

AITO Specialist Travel Agent Ian Prior of Westway Travel

Talks about what the partnership
means to him.



It was some 15 years ago when I joined AITO (www.AITO.com), believing that having holidays to sell which the big branded agencies were not able to offer, was a major benefit.

I paid a low subscription fee and briefed my staff about the opportunities available to them and waited for the business to roll in. It didn't quite roll in at first, but the odd booking certainly kept me quiet. Last summer, it dawned on me that the business plan was sound, but had I done enough to engage and promote a series of companies that offer so many exciting and different holiday experiences? I considered resigning from AITO, but instead chose to give it one last shot, still paid a low subscription fee and now cannot believe I wasted 15 years not truly making the most of being a member of such a great association.

My business was historically a holiday shop, booking traditional holidays. But do we really compete with the big boys with their marketing budgets and discounting?

Like many other agents, we matured into selling luxury or tailor-made itineraries to well-recognised world destinations. It therefore made sense to look elsewhere, and yet how can I expect my team to know everything about every corner of the world or special interest holidays?

Well, it is not as difficult as it sounds, when you start talking to your staff and operators about how to get the key messages across. I came up with a three-point plan, which started with understanding our customers. For instance, people love to pursue their hobbies whilst away and what better way to do it than abroad and with different people? So, you've got to really take the time to understand your clients – you will be surprised how they

respond. You'd then have the opportunity to talk to them about that 'garden' experience as an extra to their Canada holiday.

Garden holidays, what do we know about that? Well do not be frightened...AITO operators have the knowledge and experience you need. All you have to do is ask. Over the recent months, AITO operators have spoken to our clients directly on our behalf and together we have looked at the best way we present to the clients using the operators' stock of images, video links, interactive itineraries and testimonials. All this has enormously helped improve our conversion ratio. It has also introduced upsell opportunities at twice the price and twice the commission.

Finally, I realised that this did not happen unless I joined the party. So I now actively participate in all of the AITO events to meet people. As you have to understand your client better, why not get to know your tour operator friends better too? I now encourage my team to take advantage of training courses on these niche products. I throw myself into the conferences and social events and apart from learning more and building relationships, I have been made to feel so welcome in an association that wants to strengthen agentoperator bonds. With my new colleagues – and an understanding of their businesses – we are now collaborating on strong marketing campaigns in both a traditional and digital format that is reaping growth in our AITO business.

About 40 years ago, AITO took on the debate about bonding and industry cartels for independent travel companies. Today it continues to lobby interested parties on these same points. What's more now than ever, like me, AITO understands that we live in an ever changing market that needs a different approach to the old ways of selling travel.

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