

Photographer: Photographer - C.H. Thomassen



QUICK GUIDELINES
FOR SERVICE PROVIDER

SENIORS GO RURAL

Senior visitors to the Countryside

A New Opportunity for Business

More than 138 million people in the European Union are aged 55 or older, representing about 27% of the total population. Demographic trends show that the proportion of senior citizens will continue to increase not only in the EU, but around the world.

Seniors travel during the off-season and their requirements coincide with what rural tourism can offer: this is a great opportunity for businesses to extend the season.

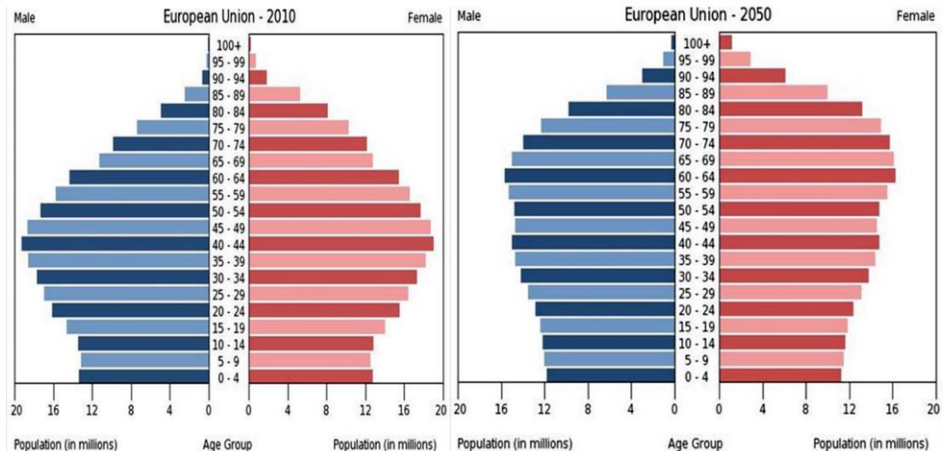
This brochures gives interested providers an overview about the special needs of this promising, growing market and how to address it adequately.

The potential of this trend for individual travel in low season is evident. The upcoming generation of

seniors is increasingly experienced in travelling abroad. They do not depend on school holidays and can travel all year round. Even more importantly, they are willing and able to prepare and organise their individual travel programme.

However there are needs and expectations that must be considered when creating relevant tourism products. This poses a challenge to adapt installations and services, and then to communicate the offers in a clear, attractive form that generates both interest and confidence. Competition in the low season is worldwide – trust and extra benefits can make the difference.

EU Population Pyramid Graph (2010, 2050)





Rural hospitality services ...

Photographer: Gloppen Hotell

...constitute about 15% of the overall capacity in Europe. To attend the 55+ age group, resources are frequently readily available or within easy reach. Many providers only need training to help design relevant products and efficient communication channels to market them.

The present document aims to fill this gap. It explains the most important aspects to keep in mind when receiving visitors of the 55+ age group. It presents innovative promotional and marketing tools that are available to attract this promising market and help increase occupancy in low season.

Why the 55+ are of interest for you?

Seniors do not depend on school holidays, they can travel off-season:

- Increasingly good health and active ageing;
- Spending power has grown considerably and is frequently comparable or even higher than other guests;
- Experienced travellers, looking for authentic experiences;
- Preferences are in line with rural assets: nature, health, personal atmosphere and attention;
- They like to travel in small groups of friends, mix with other generations, or make holiday with their grandchildren;
- Curious about local culture, gastronomy, history, nature – this offers opportunities for new products.

Photographer: Atostogos kaime



What you should keep in mind!

First of all: the 55+ do not like to be addressed or labelled as such. All the following shall be communicated in a subtle format, e.g. through pictures or side remarks.



- Accessibility and mobility – many persons in this age group have difficulties in this aspect.
- Avoid high steps, slippery floor, staircases, or assist in luggage transport and transfers.
- Detailed checklists are available from us on request. (add the block with symbols and their meaning from the client brochure).
- Lower propensity to risk – show reliability, trust, security.
- Different communication habits, they expect personal attention.

- Seniors like to socialize with other guests, provide adequate space and opportunities such as lounges, terrace, chimney room, ...
- Foreign languages – especially English – are important.
- Be prepared for dietary requisites if you provide meals.
- Access to health and medical care.
- High competition in low season, especially from warmer southern countries in “traditional” tourism – price together with a “carefree holiday guarantee” feeling are critical.

Photographer: Atostogos kaime



Give a signal: the Silver Suitcase



Senior-friendly accommodations, destinations and routes can now be easily identified by the “Silver Suitcase” symbol in advertising materials and on stickers at the doorstep.

This Silver Suitcase system is a joint effort of rural tourism providers and organisations that represent the 55+ age group across Europe.

For businesses, the participation in this scheme bring various benefits:

- External visibility;
- Transmits trust to the 55+ client;
- Presence in specific web portals and promotions, such as sengor.eurogites.org and others;
- Increase attraction of visitors especially in low season.

To participate, you need to be member of a national or regional tourism organisation affiliated to

EuroGites-European Federation of Rural Tourism. This organisation is responsible for accreditation of compliance with the criteria and rules.

Once approved, it will provide you with a series of added-value services related to promotion, reception, training, and solution of possible problems with foreign senior clients. You also should offer special conditions (discounts or bonus services) for 55+ clients, at least during low season.

Photographer: Lauku celotajs



What is the Silver Suitcase card?

The Silver Suitcase card identifies clients entitled to the discounts or bonus services.

- The card is valid at tourism destinations, accommodation and other services that are part of the programme. It also can be used in combined products such as specific tours.
- The “Silver Suitcase” card is accepted in many countries of Europe. Participating services and products can be found at the website: **<http://sengor.eurogites.org>** supported by EuroGites, the European Federation of Rural Tourism
- The card is issued individually, including the card-holder’s name and a registration number. It has a limited period of validity. Detailed rules are provided together with the card.
- Discounts are applied directly by the services on presentation of the card. The Card number and

holder’s name will be registered.

- Within each country, benefits are common to all cardholders regardless their origin or nationality. Additional conditions may apply if the card was issued by a partner Seniors Organisation.
- In each participating country, a contact point for contingencies is provided by the national EuroGites member. at country tourism services that participate in the Silver Suitcase scheme.



<http://sengor.eurogites.org>



Photographer: Lauku celotājs

<http://sengor.eurogites.org>

Project partners:



This project is co-funded by the European Commission. The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the author. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.