

## Familiarization Trips

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### Executive Summary

Familiarisation Trips, also known as Fam Trips, could be seen as an added value to Destinations & Marinas since it has many benefits. Here you can think of benefits such as first-hand experience, both valuable sales- & marketing tools, and your participants can expand their professional network. In addition, Fam Trips are not only popular these days but will become even more popular in the future. In order to get familiar with the impact of Fam Trips, you should first become aware of what the future and success of Fam Trips look like. After this, you can apply this to your own organisation and take advantage of all these benefits.

### Introduction

Familiarisation Trips (Fam Trips) are an undervalued marketing tool that any destination can use. Nevertheless, Familiarisation Trips have become increasingly popular when it comes to destination marketing over the years. This white paper was written with the intention of answering the following research questions: "How can Fam Trips create additional value and a competitive advantage to your destination?", and "Why should you have Familiarisation Trips as part of your marketing and sales proposition?". In order to do so, an explanation of what Familiarisation Trips are will be done, followed by an explanation of the benefits.

Next, the future of Fam Trips will be discussed, and finally, an overview of how Fam Trips can create a successful destination will be done.

## What are Familiarization Trips?

Familiarisation Trips are a marketing tool that highlights what your destination has to offer and can also be used to generate new leads. By definition, Fam Trips are exclusively organised educational trips that equip participants with sufficient knowledge of the destination to either sell clients or publish for media coverage. The purpose is to allow participants to experience the destination first hand (Alban, 2018). The participants of Fam Trips vary and are based on the organisation hosting the Fam Trips.

## Benefits of Familiarization Trips

Fam Trips can have many benefits to your organisation, which will lead to new business opportunities. In the following section, we will elaborate further on these benefits and how they can help you to grow as an organisation in the yachting industry.

### **1. First-hand experience**

As it has been said in the previous section, Fam Trips will give a better view of the products and services your destination has to offer. Participants are going on Fam Trips to experience this first hand (Alban, 2018). According to Annie Brigham who is working as a digital marketing coordinator at Connect Worldwide, this involvement enables participants to better understand the several benefits that different kinds of trips and excursions offer to their guests (Brigham, 2021). As a result, they can better supply the perfect products and services to their guests based on their desires and needs and effectively inform their clients on what they can expect. Next to that, it will help participants to provide high-quality content, details, and photographs for their future publications. For example, the trip may introduce them to a chef who has a fascinating life story or recipe to share (Brigham, 2021).

## **2. Valuable sales tool**

A further benefit of organising Fam Trips is that it can help your organisation to generate sales. According to the Good Tourism Institute, you have the potential to put your destination and your business on the map. The main aim of a Fam Trip is to network, build relationships and personally promote your products and services (Pohl, 2021).

## **3. Valuable marketing tool**

According to Annie Brigham, it will give a better understanding by permitting these professionals to gain first-hand experience with your product (Brigham, 2021). When it comes to benefits from hosting media personnel is that you are enhancing your media coverage; travel writers and photographers take part in these trips to photograph your offerings and compose content. If you can impress and inspire your guests during a Fam Trip, then you should be able to generate first-rate reviews and recommendations for your destination (Brigham, 2021).

## **4. Expanding your network**

Another benefit is that Fam Trips guests can expand their professional network by building connections with other participants who will have different kinds of field expertise; most Fam Trips embrace downtime to relax with other professionals (Brigham, 2021). This schedule allows them time to get in touch with industry experts and exchange stories on what has worked for their organisations. By developing long-lasting relationships with other participants, they will also acquire better deals for themselves and their future clients.

## **The future of Familiarization Trips**

“Fam Trips are more important now than they ever were,” is what Natalie Browning said, owner of Insider Travel Planners in Danville, West Virginia. “Given the circumstances, the general public is afraid to travel, or they have concerns. When they see someone they trust out travelling and experiencing new things, they are likely to follow suit. We need Fam Trips in order to show the world that we can travel and things are open.” (TravelAge West, 2020)

According to TravelAge West, the new world of Fam Trips is going to be very exclusive, focusing on changes in order to provide consumer confidence (TravelAge West, 2020). It will stay important to focus on what the traveller wants and anticipate this in the future. "Moving forward, we will be hosting smaller and more personalised Fam Trips with a stronger focus on social media", said Carilis Felipe, the company's director of field sales (TravelAge West, 2020). We want to encourage agents to document their experience on their social platforms for consumers to see and feel comfortable travelling to the destination.

Regardless of how they take place, Fam Trips are likely to become an increasingly important educational source for travel advisors, according to Thomas Carpenter, owner of Huckleberry Travel (TravelAge West, 2020).

## How can Familiarization Trips create successful destinations?

People often believe that Fam Trips hold no value, but this is probably because things went wrong in the organisational process. Maybe the right people weren't invited or the proper follow-up process did not take place. Therefore, carrying out Fam Trips the right way can be beneficial for any company (Lucht, 2015).

According to Lucht (2015), the Taiwan Convention Bureau invited 12 corporate buyers from China for a six-day Fam Tour. On the last day, the Bureau presented 12 destination management companies and travel agencies to the corporate representatives, and they generated three corporate travel deals. This amounted to 1,500 MICE travellers heading to Taiwan. The Fam produced an ROI of 3000%. The cost of the Fam was \$25,000 and Taiwan generated at least \$750,000 from the MICE travellers for the destination (Lucht, 2015).

Additionally, ACREW hosted a Fam Trip for a marina who received a ROI of 1000% based on the return visits for those who attended the Fam Trip. Another broker Fam Trip hosted by ACREW for a destination resulted in \$3.4 million charters being brokered. This shows that Fam Trips can indeed create successful destinations once done right. Here are some tips on how to successfully run Fam Trips:

## **Set Expectations**

Sending the participants their proposed itinerary in advance is a good way to manage their expectations (Alban, 2018). You can also organise a meeting a week in advance to go through the itinerary to discuss and give further details. Managing expectations is one way to ensure that the participants are not disappointed during the Fam Trip.

## **Creating Connections**

You would think that displaying your destination and tourism products should be your first priority during Fam Trips, but it shouldn't be. Your top priority should be building connections with the participants of your fam trips. Only then would you fully connect them to your destination, and be able to show their uniqueness and potential (Pohl, 2021).

## **Make Follow-Ups After The Trips**

Don't wait too long to follow up with the participants of the Fam Trip and get their feedback. See if there are any questions or suggestions. Keep the communication lines open and find out what worked and what didn't. Their feedback can be crucial going forward (Alban, 2018).

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