

# SENINTER

Is not only a trip, it is a legacy

*“SENINTER TOURISM MODEL”*

*extract*



## SENINTER TOUR

SENINTER TOUR aims to promote a slow and sustainable tourism product targeted and adapted to the **seniors travelling with their grandchildren** during the **low and medium season in Europe**.

The children are preferably **less than 6 years old**, which means that they are quite free to travel. The **seniors** are preferably retired in order to travel out of the high tourism season which means that they are **from 55 years old** and more.

In that sense, the tourism product will be based on the **discovery of the local heritage** (tangible and intangible), **culture** and on meetings with the **local community**, especially with other seniors and their **grandchildren** of the destination.

### Tourist product characteristics





Specific **moments of festivities** between the welcoming and the travellers are included in order to **exchange and enjoy intangible heritage and local culture**. Indeed, this tourism product aims to promote the **exchange between the seniors and their grandchildren** but also **between the seniors and children** as **“travellers”** and as **“locals”**.

Activities such as initiation to the **local music, cooking class, dance or telling stories** are favoured in order to promote and enhance the **local culture** and to facilitate the contact among the participants without requiring too many knowledges of the languages.

Beside all these moments, the tourism product will also include touristic activities such as **cultural visits**, pedagogical visits for the children, **open-air activities**. For the children, the travel could include **language courses**, games with other children.

Facilitators and translators will assist the travellers in order to facilitate the **contact between the cultures and languages**.

The participants will stay in the same place, in the same city in order to discover the particularities and the traditions according to the **principles of responsible, sustainable and slow tourism**.

The construction of the tourism product is realised by **local tour operator**, involving **seniors** (via association or any other way) but also **local providers** engaged in **sustainable and accessible tourism**.

In addition, senior travellers will receive specific information in order to prepare them before the travel. The purpose is to make them **aware of the culture, the language, the tradition of the destination** in order to facilitate **mutual understanding** with the welcoming seniors and their grandchildren.

“Responsible tourism is tourism that is carried out according to principles of social and economic justice and with full respect toward the environment and cultures. Responsible tourism recognizes the centrality of the local host community and its right to be protagonist in devoting sustainable and responsible tourism in its native land. Everyone of us might be a “good traveller” caring for the world and people around, just following some easy behavioural rules.”

## The SENINTER 4 PILLARS

SENINTER TOUR is based on 4 important factors and values such as **discovering the local heritage and tradition, mutual understanding, involvement of local community.**





## 1<sup>st</sup> PILLAR: Transnationality

The SENINTER model is based on important values promoted by responsible tour operators. In fact, it is based on three essential elements that have been stated by the Cape Town Declaration (2002), which are:

- To create a positive contribution to the conservation of cultural heritage and to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- To provide enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local culture;
- To engender respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence for both host and guests.

According to the purchase capacity of the target group, the package based on the SENINTER model should involve seniors and children which are preferably resident in Europe. This will increase the mobility within this area, by gathering together groups of different nationalities and historical backgrounds.

In the long term, the growth of the number of seniors will have a considerable influence on tourism. In 2080 the EUROSTAT foresees that the over 65 years old target group (EU28) will be the 28 per cent of the total population in Europe. Statistical data describe that in 2014, 18 per cent of the tourist population were seniors over 65 years old. Among them, 7 per cent decided to travel abroad (Source: EUROSTAT). This means that traveling to another country may potentially increase by developing different and innovative tourism products.

Seniors traveling abroad, i.e. potential target group of the package based on the SENINTER model, have the following characteristics:

- A medium income level, even though entity varies depending on the EU member state;
- «Young seniors» (in age 55-64) are the most attractive for the tourism and hospitality industry;
- Seniors travel more to foreign tourist destinations rather than in their own country (25 per cent of “over 55” Europeans traveled outside Europe in 2012). Traveling with children implies different condition and therefore this percentage may decrease.
- The active and youthful seniors are interested in culture and they like to discover new things. They take responsibility and are seeking for knowledge.

Summing up pros and cons (advantage and disadvantage) of the TRANSNATIONALITY:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Favors intercultural exchange among seniors and among children</li> <li>- The Knowledge of foreign cultures and life styles is a way to understand and/or overcome the differences</li> <li>- Multiplier effect: the same destination can be furthermore be chosen for a next family trip</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher transport costs</li> <li>- Language barrier, foremost for seniors</li> <li>- Grandparents and parents may feel insecure about being abroad with young children</li> </ul>



## 2<sup>nd</sup> PILLAR: Intergenerational values

According to the European project “**European Senior Citizens’ Actions to Promote Exchange in tourism**” and to the **Italian Young Tourism Observatory** statistics (2015), most senior traveler use to travel with their partner (40%) and only 5 per cent is traveling with grandchildren younger than 5 years old. This means that the SENINTER model could act as new format/new product for the senior’s target by means of inviting their grandchildren and make the experience jointly. As far as other targets are considered, i.e. children in age 6-10, the share of grandchildren traveling with grandparents increases up to 12 per cent (Source: Italian Young Tourism Observatory, 2015).

Moreover, giving the opportunity to grandparents and grandchildren to travel and spend time together affects positively the relationship within the two generation and is very much appreciated by grandparents. To take care of children under a certain age might indeed be tiring for one person. The model should consider involving both grandparents whenever possible.

The added value of the model, according to the opinions of grandparents involved in the pilot activity, is the possibility to share precious moments with their grandchildren: adults in their age perceive the value of time differently, therefore they appreciate more the time spent with their grandchildren. For children, indeed, having the opportunity to spend time with their grandparents sharing knowledge in a familiar dimension is an enormous and precious moment in their development.

Together with private conversation and narrations, sharing knowledge about personal traditions and history in a broader context (for example, storytelling moments) will firstly strengthen the relationship and secondly foster learning opportunities and knowledge transfer within the two generations. Moreover, these experiences will be done slowly and with the joy of being together.

Summing up pros and cons of the INTERGENERATIONAL element:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Great pleasure for grandparents to spend time with their grandchildren</b></li> <li>- <b>Enrichment for both target groups in terms of knowledge transfer</b></li> <li>- <b>Strengthening the relationship and the family ties along with learning opportunities</b></li> <li>- <b>Enhancing self-esteem of seniors by sharing experiences with younger generations</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Caring for children is demanding for older grandparents</b></li> <li>- <b>Children in age 3-5 years are not often used to travel without parents</b></li> <li>- <b>Different needs and interests of the two target groups</b></li> </ul>



### 3rd PILLAR: Local community

The pillar focuses on the role of the local community according to the principles of responsible tourism. It acts as a service provider in two ways: tourist service providers and welcoming local community.

#### Tourist service providers

The tourism product should be fulfilled by a local tour operator, that has a deeper knowledge of the tradition most particular and important attraction elements of their territory. Moreover, local tourist operators are able to inform and persuade other local stakeholders to be part of the experience. A tour operator or travel agent will enhance the positive aspects and the benefits that other local providers could get by participating in this innovative product.

From a merely economic point of view, the involvement of local providers together with a program that privileges a responsible and sustainable behavior favors the territory in terms of economic direct and indirect advantages. The SENINTER model represents a concrete opportunity also for minor destinations, those that fit for sustainable tourism and whose supply chain consists of tourist services combined with experiential and interactive offers linked to the local community. In this context, tourism is perceived by the residents primarily not as an opportunity, but as a disturbing element. A model that involves the community, in this case the elderly and probably more reluctant part of it, is a tool that can discard this perception. This innovative product may affect positively the development of the local tourism industry.

#### Welcoming local community

The program involves seniors and children of the host community by giving them the chance to interact with guests from abroad, sharing activities that may help to exchange experiences and knowledge on specific topics. The experiences should give the opportunity to the guests to learn more about the destination they are traveling in and, on the other hand, shall give the local community the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of their own culture, but also learn from each other. Seniors and children participating in the activities benefit from the interaction as far as they reach a mutual understanding.

The welcoming local community increases the awareness of its own cultural values and identity through the interaction with other people. Sharing personal knowledge on culture and tradition is a major benefit for the local community as it increases the affinity with the territory they live in.

Summing up pros and cons of the involvement of the LOCAL COMMUNITY:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise awareness in the host community about the values of their own tangible and intangible heritage</li> <li>- Local providers will benefit of the tourism income and indirect fallouts</li> <li>- Helps accepting tourism as leverage for the local development</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language barriers, among seniors, limits the interaction</li> <li>- Need for an awareness raising project to involve local authorities and seniors' organizations</li> </ul>





#### 4<sup>th</sup> PILLAR: Low Season

According to the European Commission, promoting tourism during the low season can stimulate economic growth and job opportunities, contributing to the competitiveness of the industry. A long term strategy should be applied to the tourist destination in order to extend the season beyond the traditional peak periods (summer holidays and winter festivities). Already in 1991, the CEE Commission stated that the fundamental problem of the tourism sector in Europe is its strong concentration in the high season. This causes the congestion of transport capacity and reception services as well as the degradation of the natural and human environment in the high season and a low use of financial and human resources in the low season.

Mostly in Southern Europe, tourism destinations try to expand the season to increase the occupancy rate in the accommodation facilities during the low season; this is one of the main tourism development goals. Local enterprises could benefit from this possibility by splitting fixed costs on a longer period. Even the job market would be more stable. Consequently, the carrying capacity of tourism destinations will strongly benefit from this product.

In order to cope with the challenge of the seasonality, the target groups, seniors and children, hosts and guests, should be:

- Retired grandparents and/or with possibility to travel during the low season
- Children free from a regular and mandatory school schedule and attendance

It is important to underline that such constraints apply to the guests as well as to the host community. Even though, to reach a broader target activity taking place in the afternoon shall be planned, in order to involve local children that attend a part-time morning daycare (i.e. kindergarten or similar). Moreover, as school calendar differs considerably within the European Union, while organizing a tour based on the SENINTER model, the period could reflect the school calendar of guest children.

The involvement of a specific target group in order to bring guests in a tourism destination during the low season is an important marketing issue and allows tourist service providers to differentiate their product's panel and reach a broader market share. While investigating the profitability of this model, the fact that seniors travelling with small children are still a niche market should be taken into consideration.

Summing up pros and cons of the development of a LOW SEASON package:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience tourism destinations during non-crowded periods</li> <li>- Enhance the profitability of the tourism SMEs involved in the package</li> <li>- Decrease the congestion of transport and services</li> <li>- Not weigh on the carrying capacity of the tourism destination</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourist attraction may have shorter opening times, due to the reduced tourism flows</li> <li>- Hotel special services, such as babysitting or baby club, may be available only upon request</li> <li>- No possibility to reach age group over 6 years old</li> </ul>

### Practical information

The tourist operators willing to create a tour package based on the SENINTER model have to consider the following list of expenditures:

- Travel costs to/from and within the destination;
- Accommodation and extra meals (i.e. show cooking);
- Sightseeing activities for seniors and children (guide, entrance);
- Interactive activities with the local communities (c/o seniors organizations);
- Workshops and ateliers for children only;
- Tour leader, children's entertainer, interpreter, facilitator/moderator during the whole tour.

All those elements are part of the package, except for the choice of the guidance during the tour that depends on the group composition.

Moreover, specific elements shall be considered as the tours are organized during the low season:

- guided tours might not be available in all languages;
- historical sites and attractions may have shorter opening times;
- seniors' organizations might be closed on Sundays,;
- the calendar of children's organization may be in conflict because overwhelmed with activities in schools.



## Involvement of local community

There are two various levels of involvement of the local community: while considering the logistic aspects, the involvement of local enterprises and organizations – both for children and seniors – is preferred. They can promote sightseeing and workshop activities at its best, while considering the characteristics of the target groups. The local seniors' and children's organization are a different kind of local actors as they influence mostly the cultural part of the tour package through the valorization of traditions and intangible cultural heritage.

### Local tourist operators

- Accommodation: prefer local SMEs, \*\*\*hotels with B&B treatment and with children's menu. When possible, the hotel should correspond to the sustainability criteria such as, for instance, the possibility to offer local products in the catering. Please note: check the availability of family services such as entertainment (baby club), proper playgrounds inside and outside the building.
- Sightseeing: as being transnational is a strength of this model, local visitors bureau shall be involved in the organization of a tailor-made product for this specific target group. The offer should include the opportunity to visit some relevant highlights of the territory in accordance with the slow tourism philosophy.

### Local edutainment organizations

- Seniors' organization: seniors' organizations act through a territorial system (for example, involving the Italian social centers) or through an interests-based model (for example, involving the Third Age Universities). Both organizations are valid partners for the development of the tourism product, but activities organized within this framework may vary.
- Children's organizations: there is plenty of association dealing with children and nowadays services for preschooler are increasing. In accordance with the principle of sustainable and responsible tourism that undergo the whole product, the organizations shall be able to promote workshops or ateliers with a strong pedagogical commitment in transmitting this philosophy.

At the beginning of the development of the model, a strong effort in the communication and in raising awareness of the opportunities for local actors and local tourism and culture authorities should be planned. The more structured the organization is, the more effort shall be paid in the planning of the activities. The activities that are organized according to the SENINTER model should reflect seniors' organizations' scopes and objectives and should not affect much their daily routine.



Due to the fact that the tourism product involves four target groups (foreign seniors, foreign children, local seniors and local children) a special effort shall be made by considering the opportunity of having one or more tour leaders that will accompany the group and moderate the interactive activities. The facilitator plays, in fact, a very important role: he should favor the interaction between hosts and guests and should preferably have a deep knowledge of both cultures. An interpreter is necessary for those activities where more passive interaction is planned. On the guest side and depending on the age and number of children, could be necessary to have an entertainer for the younger guests.

To favor the better possible interaction among hosts and guests and having special consideration for seniors who must face also language barriers, the tour package should have a maximum number of participants which is up to 15 children and up to 30 adults, which means that each child is attended by both grandparents, whenever possible.

Furthermore, for a better interaction within the two groups, some special sightseeing tours and activities could also involve the group of local seniors and children, so to let them participate actively in the travel experience. In this case, a separate tourist offer shall be planned and sold separately and in accordance with the local seniors' organization.

### Involvement of seniors

Foreign seniors traveling abroad shall be informed in advance of the peculiarity of the SENINTER model and should be aware which activities are planned together or without children. Moreover, they should be informed the interaction with the local community is central and they should receive some information about the hosting community before traveling.

For instance, Third Age Universities could plan this tour together with the proposal of one or more seminars on the travel destination. Special focus, when possible, should be the local culture (cuisine, dance, customs, and traditions). Italian social centers, indeed, could schedule particular activities in order to raise the awareness of local knowledge among the hosting community (cooking or dance contests, revival of past traditions ...).

### Activities for the target group

The SENINTER model is based on the involvement of two target groups. This means that two different needs and expectations shall be met. Some activities are made at the same time but in different locations, while others are experienced together. Generally speaking, the activities that involve the active participation and are feasible also for children can be planned jointly. On the other hand, cultural visits that do not foster a strong interaction can be only partially participated by children.



As the target group is composed by seniors and children together it is necessary to bear in mind that the time schedule should foresee no more than two organized activities per day and some free time. Adults and children have different rhythms for visiting and sightseeing activities rather than commercial organized tours.

### Activities for seniors

In order for seniors to overcome language barriers, only specific kinds of activities can be planned in order to favor a better acquaintance with the host group. Examples of activities that may favor the knowledge transfer among hosts and guests and do not expect knowledge of foreign languages could be music and dance contests, show cooking and lunch/dinner together with the results of the class, handicrafts workshops, special games tournaments, and so on.

However, the tour is intended also as an important mean of knowing the most important attractions of the tourism destination. This means that also guided tours to the city centers and to the most relevant monuments shall be part of the package. If the participation of some seniors and children of the host community is supported, a good relationship with the guests can be established.

### Activities for children

All children and particularly preschoolers have the ability to interact easily with each other without any kind of barrier or bias. Nevertheless, children in age 3-5 years old shall be led into specific activities. This means that the product gains in appraisal if valuable associations/entertainers can involve children in workshops on the same topics their grandparents are dealing with. For instance, while seniors are visiting important Roman mosaics, children are creating their own artwork.

In order to be coherent with the SENINTER model and respect the sustainable and responsible principles, the children's activities shall take into consideration historical, social and environmental issues.

Of course, organising games has a great pedagogical potential and children should be allowed to have free time to play, but also to be guided in games with their grandparents and the hosting community such, for example, a treasure hunt or similar "competitions".

## Specific requirements for tourist services

Along with usual requirements, such as accessibility, family rooms, playground / playroom and dedicated menus, there are some other aspects that are specific for a product based on the SENINTER model.

1. The destination of a tour can include a territory and not only a city, but the transfer shall not last longer than 20 minutes, i.e. all attractions and activities shall be reached in a 20 kilometers range.
2. The accommodation should not be too far from the location of single activities, in order to be able to get back to the hotel and rest. Free time is fundamental for both seniors and children, even though optional activities can be offered.
3. Cultural sightseeing might be demanding for children staying with grandparents as the level of attention decreases easily and fast.
4. Depending on the regions involved in this package, consider two full traveling days, one to reach the destination and one for the return.



### Useful tips for planning

1. The main target of the SENINTER model is the guest children group: it is necessary to plan the tours and the activities according to a slow schedule that encounters children's needs to play, rest and recover. Plan time to rest after lunch and free time after the workshops/visits.
2. A strength of the SENINTER model is the fulfilment of seniors' expectations in spending time with their grandchildren. Free time during the trip could favor this opportunity.
3. As the model is based on the interaction within the two target groups, a special attention shall be paid while choosing activities which favor the dialog and the interaction with each other. This is particularly true for elderly people whereas children have fewer barriers.
4. Promoting a sort of routine in the tour program may favor the relationships among seniors. In this case, the program could be turned easily into a twinning, with a greater benefit for both tourist operators and tourist groups.
5. Facilitators and translators play a crucial role in order to favor a better and more genuine interaction among the seniors. A translator will be necessary during sightseeing, but also during activities such as "story telling", where a mutual understanding is needed.
6. Local senior's organization develop trust in the SENINTER model through the repetition of the visits by different group of grandparents and grandchildren.
7. The tour should not exceed 6 days, where day 1 and day 6 are planned for travelling to/from the destination.

**TO HAVE MORE INFORMATION AND TO DOWNLOAD THE COMPLETE GUIDE  
"SENINTER TOURISM PRODUCT MODEL"**

**PLEASE CONTACT: [comtur@regione.emilia-romagna.it](mailto:comtur@regione.emilia-romagna.it)**

**ALL PICTURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN DURING THE PILOT ACTION**

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